



A RECORD OF A MORTAL'S JOURNEY TO IMMORTALITY

BOOK 07

Wang Yu

EPUB CREATION BY LISA HAYES

A Record of a Mortal's Journey to Immortality

(凡人修仙传)

by

Wang Yu

(忘语)

Synopsis

A poor and ordinary boy from a village joins a minor sect in Jiang Hu and becomes an Unofficial Disciple by chance.

How will Han Li, a commoner by birth, establish a foothold for himself in his sect?

With his mediocre aptitude, how will he successfully traverse the path of cultivation and become an immortal?

This is a story of an ordinary mortal who, against all odds, clashes with devilish demons and the ancient celestials in order to find his own path to immortality.

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English Translation by DoubledD and GandalfsSocks @ [Gravity Tales](#)

Translation Edit by Koreanmist, Asvare @ [Gravity Tales](#)

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Chapter 601: Entering The Sect (3)

Han Li and the Qi Condensation cultivators weren't surprised by this, and they were brought to Dayspring mountain by the youth surnamed Yu.

They met many cultivators along the way with most of them being Qi Condensation cultivators. When they saw the youth, they respectfully saluted him. It appeared the youth had quite the reputation in the Drifting Cloud Sect.

They only came across one Foundation Establishment cultivator, a yellow-robed man with a thin face and sharp ears. He flew up from Dayspring Mountain, but when he caught sight of the youth surnamed Yu, he smiled and called out to him, "Junior Martial Brother Yu, are these six newly arrived disciples? It seemed there weren't that many this time around!" While he acted quite familiar with the youth, the others were able to see that he held hidden motives.

The handsome youth unconsciously frowned upon seeing the yellow-robed cultivator. Regardless, he calmly replied, "So it turned out to be Senior Martial Brother Yan! These people still need to be examined with truth techniques and be introduced to the sect master before they become official disciples. They are still only candidates."

The yellow-robed cultivator chuckled and said, "So its like that. However, Junior Martial Brother Should know that my talisman refinement division still needs to disciples. Do you think you could send two of these cultivators to me?"

At that moment, his eyes focused on the group behind him.

Han Li's expression was calm, but he felt quite disgusted from his gaze. From the way he looked at them and the tone he used, he certainly wanted to work them to the bone.

When the other cultivators heard him, their expressions slightly changed. It seemed they also didn't have a favorable impression of him.

"Senior Martial Brother Yan, that is not something that I can decide. You should know that the allocation of disciples are decided by the sect master. If Senior Martial Brother feels that he doesn't have enough disciples for his talisman refinement division, you may bring it up with the Sect Master. Since Senior Martial Brother Miao is still waiting for me at the acceptance residence, I can't keep you company any longer." The youth surnamed Yu seemed to understand the yellow-robed cultivator's deceitful nature and immediately refused his request. After uttering an excuse, he stamped on his magic tool and brought the group of cultivators down to the pavilion below.

The yellow-robed cultivator thought to further tangle him down, but after hearing the youth mention Senior Martial Brother Miao, he revealed slight hesitation and allowed the youth to go.

After watching the youth and company enter the pavilion from a distance away, his expression fluctuated. After lowering his head in thought for a moment, he coldly snorted and flew off to a different mountain in a streak of yellow light.

At that moment, the group had already arrived on the first floor of the pavilion and were meeting with an unfamiliar man.

He was a shriveled youth that was glancing through a bamboo scroll with keen interest as he sat in a sandalwood armchair. The man only appeared to be thirty years of age, but his cultivation had already reached the late Foundation Establishment stage. Although he had only reached late Foundation Establishment and hadn't yet consolidated his cultivation, he truly was a rarely seen talent. Having reached so far at his current age, he had great hopes of rising to Core Formation stage. Could it be because of this man's name that the annoying yellow-robed cultivator didn't dare to trouble Junior Martial Brother Yu any further?

When the other cultivators witnessed the shriveled youth's cultivation, they glanced at each other with expressions of shock.

At that moment, this person had already folded up the bamboo scroll and glanced at youth. He said with a soft voice, "Junior Martial Brother Yu, I've put you through a bit of trouble. Did Junior Martial Brother Yan block you just now?" Since Senior Martial Brother already knows of it, there should be no need to ask. However, did that person come again to bother Senior Martial Sister Peiling?" The valiant-appearing youth asked with disgust.

"That person? Even if Junior Martial Brother Yan is somewhat excessive, he is still a fellow disciple of our Drifting Cloud Sect. Your words are inappropriate. Please take further note of it in the future, else if the master notices, punishment is unavoidable." The sickly youth's words may have meant to rebuke him, but his tone was completely flat, lacking even the slightest anger.

But all the same, the Junior Martial Brother Yu's heart trembled and he hastily said, "Senior Martial Brother is correct. This younger disciple will certainly pay attention to this in the future." Seeing that the youth admitted his wrong, Senior Martial Brother Miao nodded his head and smiled. He then turned his gaze to Han Li and the others as he began to examine each of them.

It seemed to be looking at them quite thoroughly, slowly looking at them from head to toe. This had aroused quite a bit of anxiousness among those present. Possibly due to a misconception, Han Li felt that his gaze momentarily paused on the large fully bearded man before quickly turning to another person. Although it was impossible for Han Li's true cultivation be seen through him, Han Li felt slightly uneasy.

After a short moment, Senior Martial Brother Miao withdrew his gaze and calmly patted at his waist and took out a talisman that sparkled with silver light.

"It's good that only about seven had come as I had expected.

Otherwise, I wouldn't have enough True Heart talismans for all of you. Junior Martial Brother Yu, take these talismans and place them on their body. After they take effect, bring them to my study." Senior Martial Brother Miao spoke with a serene tone and handed the talismans to the youth. He then stood up from his chair and walked up to the second floor without paying them any further attention.

However, when the shriveled youth slowly turned the corner, he suddenly bent down and began to rapidly cough. It sounded quite painful, but soon after, he managed to stand up and head towards the stairway underneath the bewildered gazes of everyone there.

A trace of astonishment flickered from Han Li's eyes, but it quickly disappeared.

Junior Martial Brother Yu revealed a trace of anxiousness and sighed before turning towards Han Li and the others. "These are True Heart talismans. I'm sure you know what they do, so I'll save my breath. If you harbor any sinister designs or conspiracies, it would be best for you to take the initiative to leave. Otherwise, if you're discovered, don't blame our Drifting Cloud Sect for being ruthless."

With that said, a cold glint flickered from the youth's eyes as he glanced at the seven before him. Although his tone was quite fearsome, nobody took the initiative to leave.

As a result, the youth nodded with a relaxed expression and tossed the silver talismans towards the seven with a wave of his arm. They all stuck on beneath each of their right shoulders. The youth then casually sat down without any regard for the other seven and closed his eyes.

The others glanced at each other in dismay. Although they all had their own thoughts in mind, none of them dared to tear off the truth talisman. They could only wait.

At that moment, Han Li tilted his head and glanced at the silver

talisman near his shoulder. For a very brief moment, he smirked. Not long after, the talisman began to shine with silver light before it soon faded away.

When the youth felt something had happened, he opened his eyes and glanced at Han Li, emotionlessly saying, "Go to the second floor. Senior Martial Brother Miao is waiting for you!"

When Han Li heard that, he glanced at the talisman and wordlessly climbed up the stairs.

The second floor was quite empty. There was nothing there apart from two praying mats. The shriveled youth was sitting cross-legged on top one of them. When he saw that Han Li had arrived, he pointed to the other prayer mat and smiled, "Please sit down! There is no need to be nervous. It will be over quickly. The interrogation technique isn't anything like a soul bewitchment technique. It only determines whether or not your answers are truthful. Although it doesn't hold completely certainty, it will hold correct most of the time. As such, I will ask you ten questions. If three or more are judged to be false, you will not be accepted into the sect. Do you understand?"

Han Li nodded his head and sincerely said, "Junior understands." He then sat down on the prayer mat in front of the youth. Regardless, Han Li inwardly sneered. As if the True Heart Technique could ever reveal his true intentions!

"Alright, let's start. Where were you born..." Seeing that the talisman on Han Li's shoulder was flashing with silver light, he began to ask questions.

...

Han Li and others flew off from the pavilion and headed straight towards the largest mountain. All of the cultivators had passed the shriveled youth's cultivation without problem. As such, once the Drifting Cloud Sect Master recognized them and recorded their names, they would become official disciples of the sect.

Chapter 602: Gold Forged Constitution

The main peak of the Six Marvelous Peaks was also the largest, standing at a height of over ten kilometers. Many other mountains surrounded it like stars to the moon with Dayspring Mountain being among them. The top half of this mountain was also enveloped in a faint purple fog, concealing everything in a mysterious haze.

Conversely, the bottom half of the bottom mountain was bustling with lively activity. There were countless buildings of all sizes that covered the mountain spanning from crude stone rooms and expansive hundred meter tall palace halls, and there were a mess of countless scattered limestone roads paved throughout.

Among these roads were stalls of all sorts with people selling and buying the goods on display. Many Drifting Cloud Sect disciples were included among them as they haggled over the various items with the vender stall owners.

When Han Li and the other cultivators saw this, they were left dumbstruck.

The youth surnamed Yu was already accustomed to the sight and paid it no attention as he moved his flying magic tool forward. They shot about kilometer into the air and flew alone into a stone hall.

The stone hall was made of huge slabs of limestone that reached about a hundred meters tall. And each side of the hall was connected to smaller side rooms that were only about twenty meters wide. There were sparsely few cultivators that entered and left the halls.

Cultivator Yu then landed the alms bowl in front of the hall and had all of them get off. Afterwards, he formed an incantation gesture and had the alms bowl quickly shrink before he put it away into his storage pouch.

"Wait here for a moment. I have to first report to the Sect Master. I'll call for you afterwards." The youth then walked into the hall in a large stride.

The many Qi Condensation door keepers clearly recognized Cultivator Yu and merely saluted him with respect as they watched him walk into the hall.

After the youth disappeared from sight, the guards curiously glanced at Han Li and the others. They seemed to have already guessed who they were.

A while later, a streak of white light towards the palace hall before fading away. The light was revealed to be a huge embroidered scarf carrying the pale-faced youth surnamed Liu along with the four other young cultivators that had left before them.

The pale-faced youth gazed at Han Li's group of seven and revealed a trace of surprise. But soon after, he landed his flying magic tool nearby and proudly entered the stone hall, leaving the four young cultivators behind.

In the next moment, Han Li's group and the group of four young gifted cultivators glanced at one another.

For some unknown reason, the atmosphere appeared somewhat amiss despite the fact that both groups were going to enter the sect at the same time. There seemed to be a trace of hostility between them. But as they were about to enter the Drifting Cloud Sect, the two sides could only keep silent and behave themselves.

After the time it took to finish a meal, cultivator Yu had finally walked out from the outside. When he appeared, he immediately beckoned to Han Li's group and then turned towards the group of four gifted youths, "You four will be coming in with us. The Sect Master wishes to accept you all as disciples at the same time." With that said, the youth turned around and reentered the hall.

The two groups didn't dare to delay and hastily followed after him.

Following the youth, they passed through a short corridor before entering a hundred meter wide hall. There were eight cultivators sitting down in chairs, whispering about something as they each wore their own expressions.

After the disciple were brought inside, the seated cultivators immediately ceased talking and began to examine Han Li's group.

At that moment, Han Li appeared sincere as he displayed deference to them. But at the same time, he had released his spiritual sense and read the appearances and cultivations of the seated cultivators.

There was a late Foundation Establishment cultivator, two mid Foundation Establishment cultivators, and the rest were only at early Foundation Establishment. Senior Martial Brother Qiu and the pale-faced cultivator were sitting amongst them.

The blue-robed late Foundation Establishment cultivator waved his hand at the youth and smiled, "We've troubled Junior Martial Brother Yu! Please, take a seat." This person was the Drifting Cloud Sect Master, Wei Yiming.

He had an ordinary appearance with two small eyes. However, each of his movements gave off an exceptionally imposing presence; it appeared he wasn't a simple character.

"Many thanks Senior Martial Brother!" The youth cupped his hands and directly sat down at the chair at the side.

At that moment, the seated cultivator's gazes had finished examining Han Li's group and had finally moved on to the four talented youths. Each of the youths' gaze revealed a trace of fervent excitement and their bodies straightened upon being examined.

As Han Li took all of this in with a trace of surprise, he heard the sect master speak.

After examining the new disciples, the sect master glanced at the other seated cultivators and slowly said, "Yes! These disciples are suitable enough to enter the sect. They are suitable. After all, we haven't taken in a batch of disciples since several years ago. Junior Martial Brothers, how do you wish for the disciples will be allocated?"

"Naturally, we wholeheartedly agree that the final decision will lie with Senior Martial Brother Wei." An old man with grey hair twirled his short beard and spoke with an exceptionally respectful tone. His voice then changed as he smoothly said, "My Hidden Sword Mountain have no need for any external affair disciples. However, for inner sect disciples, my own Hidden Sword Mountain only recruited two disciples the last time around and is lacking in manpower. My mountain should have a disciple this time around. I have no need for the other disciples, except for the disciple with the Gold Forged constitution."

After the old man said this, he pointed to the tall and sturdy youth. When the youth heard him, he couldn't help but reveal surprise.

A deathly-pale middle-aged man, unable to stay sitting upon hearing the old man, bluntly retorted, "Humph! You might've received fewer disciples the last time around, but you also received a disciple with dual-attribute spiritual roots. Needless to say, our Fire Cloud Mountain must be the ones to claim the disciple with the abnormal constitution."

When the grey-haired old man heard this, he chuckled and shook his head, "Your Fire Cloud Mountain mainly relies on fire attribute cultivation arts, but cultivators possessing the Gold Forged Constitution possess metal attribute spiritual roots. Junior Martial Brother Yang, your position is lacking."

"Even if your hidden sword mountain possess metal attribute cultivation techniques, our Fire Cloud Sect's Senior Martial Uncle Li's Metal Tempering Arts are renown throughout the entire State

of Xi. Why can't this disciple cultivate his techniques?" The middle-aged man didn't reveal the slightest intention of backing down.

"You..."

The sect master frowned and interrupted, "Enough, I've already heard your thoughts. There is no need to further speak of them."

Senior Martial Brother Liu smiled and mediated, "That's right. Senior Martial Brothers' dispute will have no end. It's better to have Sect Master decide. After all, regardless of which mountain receives him, he will still be a disciple of our Drifting Cloud Sect in the end. There is no good reason to fight."

The old man and the deathly-pale middle-aged man glanced at each other, but the old man rushed to say, "Junior Martial Brother Qiu's words holds reason. Our Hidden Sword Mountain will hold no complaint if the Sect Master makes the decision."

When the middle-aged man heard this, he hesitated for a moment before agreeing.

The sect master's expression relaxed and after a moment of thought, he turned to Han Li's group and calmly said, "These disciples are particularly special so we should handle them last. Let's distribute these other disciples. After all, our six mountains of the Drifting Cloud Sect have never turned away from good help. Let's first distribute these seven external affair disciples."

Two hours later, Han Li and the fully bearded man stood on a huge alms bowl and were being brought back to Dayspring Mountain by Cultivator Yu.

They've already changed to the attire of blue robes for low grade disciples and had been distributed to Dayspring Mountain.

Cultivator Yu brought the two out of the stone hall once the distribution was finished without the slightest complaint.

As for the tall and sturdy youth that was in high demand, he was

unexpectedly assigned to Illusion Stone Mountain. Although the grey-haired old man and the middle-aged man were both dispirited, they could only concede the matter. But fortunately, they were each given an inner sect disciple and had ended up with something for their troubles.

“Although you’ve only entered the sect as external affair disciples, it is quite fortunate for you to be distributed to our Dayspring Mountain. Because our Martial Ancestor gentle and kind-hearted, we won’t treat you too harshly. You only have to finish your assignments within the given time. The rest of your time will be free to do as you wish.”

If you have the opportunity to acquire great merits, perhaps the Martial Ancestor will even bestow a Foundation Establishment Pill to you. After all, external affair and inner sect disciples receive the same treatment in name. However, the inner sect disciple’s main assignments are to cultivate. Because of your poor aptitudes, you are assigned to other various tasks such as medicine and talisman refinement. The attainments of the many Martial Uncles in these fields are quite profound.” Because Han Li and the fully-bearded man were already disciples of Dayspring Mountain, Cultivator Yun spoke to the two with a much more gentle tone as he gave them an explanation of sect matters.

Chapter 603: Affiliation

“Many thanks for Martial Uncle Yu’s guidance!” Although Han Li found it somewhat awkward, he wore a respectful expression as he uttered his thanks.

As for the fully bearded man, he merely grinned, appearing simple as if he weren’t one for words.

Already knowing that there was something amiss about his past, Han Li felt dumbfounded. The large man’s acting skills had already reached perfection. Could it be he truly didn’t know about the oddities of his own body?

While that Senior Martial Brother Miao also noticed something odd, Han Li was certain that a late Foundation Establishment cultivator wouldn’t be able to see through the person’s cold Qi. There was certain to be something amiss; it was quite thought provoking.

Cultivator Yu seemed pleased by the two’s reactions and spoke a few words more before bringing them to a pavilion located at the center of Dayspring Mountain.

They landed on a limestone platform where two young teenagers were chatting about something. When they saw Cultivator Yu appear, they immediately stopped talking and approached them.

The doll-faced girl chuckled and asked, “Well if it isn’t Martial Uncle Yu! Did you come to visit Martial Ancestor?” Knowing the strictness of seniority in the cultivation world, Han Li felt shocked at the girl’s casual attitude.

Cultivator Yu smiled and said, “That’s right. These two are external affair disciples that our mountain had received from this selection. I am here to report to Martial Ancestor and see which Senior Martial Brothers to give them to.” It appeared he was quite familiar with the girl.

The girl then turned her gaze to Han Li and the large man. She sweetly smiled and said, “So they’re newly arrived Junior Martial Brothers. If you have an opportunity in the future, please don’t forget to pay me and Junior Martial Brother Xin a visit and tell me a bit about the mortal world. I’m looking forward to it.”

The dark-skinned teenager at her side meekly muttered, “If Senior Martial Sister wishes to hear them, don’t drag me in. I would prefer to cultivate.”

“You can cultivate anytime you want, but having new disciples enter Dayspring Mountain from the mortal world is something that is hard to come by. Naturally, we should listen to a few interesting tales from the outside!” Although she was quite young and dainty, she had chided the boy with a bold attitude, leaving him at a loss for words.

Cultivator Yu revealed a wry smile and shook his head before bringing Han Li and the large man into the courtyard.

As they walked, Cultivator Yu warned, “Keep note of those two. Junior Martial Sister Ma and Junior Martial Brother Xin may appear young and hold the same seniority as you, they are the Martial Ancestor’s descendants from the mortal world. Although they haven’t yet been accepted as official disciples, it is a matter that will occur sooner or later. Do not offend them no matter what; nobody will protect you from the Martial Ancestor.”

When Han Li heard this, he nodded his head with a forced smile. As for the large man, he rubbed the back of his head and silently smiled.

When Cultivator Yu saw their reactions, he smiled and consoled them, “Junior Martial Brother Xin is a sincere person. He won’t do anything inappropriate. Although Junior Martial Sister Ma had always been somewhat mischievous, she doesn’t bear any malice. There is no need to be too worried about them; you just have to pay a bit more attention to them.”

Of course, Han Li and the large man repeated nodded their heads in response.

As that was said, the three had already passed through three courtyards before appearing in front of a secluded side wing.

As soon as the three appeared at the side wing, they faintly heard a man's voice. "Is that you, Jun'er?"

When Yu Jun heard this, he immediately stopped in place and solemnly replied, "Disciple pays his respects to master!"

"Your Third Martial Brother and your Fifth Martial Sister also happen to be here. Go ahead and bring the two behind you inside." From the liveliness of the voice, the owner seemed to be in a good mood.

"Yes!" Yu Jun didn't dare to delay and called to Han Li and large man before hastily entering the half closed door of the side room.

Apart from several pots of various unknown plants, the elegant and refined hall only had a black wood table along with a set of chairs. A middle-aged man in scholar robes sat at the side. He had an incredibly old fashioned appearance with a long, thin mustache and beard that reached to his chest, giving him a sagelike appearance with otherworldly poise.

To his side stood an old man and a young woman.

With a wrinkle-filled face and pure white hair, the old man was by all means someone that appeared to nearly reach his end. He was silently smiling. As for the woman, she appeared to be in her late twenties and possessed a fair, elegant appearance. She was currently expressionless.

Yu Jun hastily stepped forward and saluted them in a kneel, "I pay my respects to Master! Greetings, Third Senior Martial Brother, Fifth Senior Martial Sister!"

"Please stand up. There are no outsiders here, no need to be so formal. So these two must be newly accepted disciples to our

Dayspring Mountain!” The middle-aged man waved his arm and had the Yu Jun stand up. Afterwards, he examined Han Li and the large man with interest.

When Han Li saw that this person was a mid Core Formation cultivator, he felt somewhat gloomy, but he could only force a smile and call out to him as, “Martial Ancestor.” The large man had done the same.

This Martial Ancestor possessed neither the capability of spotting the peculiarity of the large man’s body nor seeing through Han Li’s true cultivation.

As such, he asked for their names and casually said, “Good, good, good...” He then turned to old man and young woman at his side and mildly instructed them, “Since you two are here, I won’t have to bother any others. As an expert in talisman refinement and a pill concoction adept, you should be lacking people. Take in these two newly arrived disciples for the time being. Naturally, pick a cultivation art for them along the way. Even if they are external affair disciples, if their cultivation is too poor, they’ll be a target of ridicule by their fellow sect members from the other mountains.”

The white-faced old man replied with a wide smile, “Yes, Master! Junior Martial Sister and I will take a person each.”

The beautiful woman in her twenties hesitated for a moment before nodding her head.

After a moment of thought, the old man proposed, “Since Junior Martial Sister also agrees, how about I take Martial Nephew Du over to my talisman refinement division? I am in need of sturdy helpers, so that will leave Martial Nephew Han to you!”

The woman agreed with an unchanged expression, not bothering to glance at Han Li.

When the middle-aged man saw this, he nodded his head and spoke to Han Li and the large man, “You two are dismissed. Wait

outside for a moment. I still have matters to discuss with your seniors.”

Han Li and the large man glanced at each other before sincerely acknowledging him. They then headed out the room and stood about ten meters away from the room as they obediently waited.

Soon after, the large man glanced to the cloudless far away sky as he remained still. It was unknown what he was thinking about. As for Han Li, he wore a lazy expression as he eavesdropped on the conversation inside. With his immense spiritual sense, Han Li was able to listen without a problem. Although his expression was unchanged, several odd movements escaped from his eyes.

After the time it took to finish a meal, the door to the side room finally opened, and the three disciples left the room one after the other.

The old man wordlessly raised his hand and released a slender magic tool. After he said his farewells to the woman and Yu Jun, he took the skies with the large man in tow.

At that moment, the woman walked over to Han Li and coldly swept his gaze past him. She emotionlessly said, “Let’s go. You’ll be coming back with me to my cave residence.”

A faint smirk momentarily appeared on Han Li’s face before he nodded with an indifferent expression.

With a pulse of red light, an expanse of red mist enveloped the both of them.

Four hours later, Han Li had appeared at a strange medicine garden that was over three hundred meters wide.

The verdant medicine garden had many types of single medicinal herbs and a thatched cottage with three rooms. When Han Li saw the nameless small mountain nearby, Han Li stroked his chin and revealed a faint smile.

Previously, the cold and elegant mid Foundation Establishment

woman had used a red ribbon to bring the two to her cave residence. This “Martial Aunt” Mu Peiling had asked him if he was willing to look after the medicinal garden or if he was willing learn the art of pill refinement.

This had stunned Han Li. After all, so long as a cultivator was right of mind, they would agree to learn without a doubt.

But before the woman waited for Han Li’s reply, she coldly explained that looking after the medicine garden was rather simple. So long as he handed over a fixed amount of medicinal ingredients, he could spent a majority of his time in cultivation. Although external affair disciples also had an opportunity to touch upon the profound path of medicinal pills, the cost of pursuing that path was to refine a certain amount of pills every month, greatly reducing their cultivation time. As a result, each of them had their own advantages.

Without even the slightest deliberation, Han Li instantly chose his old task of looking after the medicine garden. This was a task that may as well have been created for him; it would allow him to cultivate without fear or obstruction.

He had originally thought that he would have to escape from various menial jobs in order to cultivate. But as it turned out, this extremely suitable medicine garden task was brought before him by fortunate chance!

The cold, elegant woman didn’t reveal the slightest surprise at Han Li’s choice.

Since he was brought here, Mu Peiling brought away the original keeper of the medicinal garden and left behind a jade slip that recorded the water attribute cultivation art, the Profound Ice Arts.

This medicine garden had now become Han Li’s domain.

Chapter 604: Removing Potential Problems

Han Li waited for the elegant woman to disappear off into the sky before flipping his palm. There was a blue jade slip, a green jade slip, and a yellow command talisman.

The green jade slip included methods and tips of how to tend to the plants in the medicine garden that was left behind by the previous caretaker. Because the grade of the medicine herbs here was quite common and there was only a small variety of them, so long as he wasn't a moron to the utmost degree, tending to the garden would be extremely easy.

As for the blue jade talisman, it recorded the cultivation art that Mu Peiling had left behind. The Profound Ice Arts wasn't a top grade cultivation art by any means. It was so pathetically weak that it couldn't even be considered a second rate cultivation art. Its only merit was that it was easy to cultivate and its bottlenecks were comparatively easy to break through.

However, this wasn't a result of malice or bad intentions. As Han Li was an external affairs disciple, his cultivation must've been poor so she had opted to give an easier cultivation art to him.

As for the command medallion, it controlled the crude spell formation that enveloped the medicine garden. Of course, he didn't hold it with much regard and placed all three of the items in his storage pouch. Afterwards, he entered the thatched cottage with unhurried steps and slowly walked through it before leaving.

As Han Li stood in front of the cottage, he swept his gaze towards the small small mountain behind the medicine garden and revealed a faint smile.

He slowly closed his eyes and gradually released his spiritual sense to envelope a radius of about fifteen kilometers. After seeing that there were no other cultivators in the area, he waved his arms without regard.

A series of clear rings sounded out as a dozen twinkling azure flying swords left his sleeve and shot towards to the stone small mountain. Under the control of his spiritual sense, the flying swords efficiently cut out a cave from the mountain as if its stone were soft tofu. In an instant, he had already carved out a deep cave residence.

Han Li's consciousness then split into many strands as he had them control each of his flying swords. Each of them began to hurriedly carve out stone rooms, each unique in their size and style. As Han Li had already become incredibly proficient in splitting his consciousness, this had taken very little effort. About six hours later, a new small-scale cave residence had secretly appeared in the mountain.

Han Li revealed a trace of happiness at seeing that the first draft of his cave residence was completed and immediately took out several sets of formation flags and discs. The small mountain then became incredibly busy as several high grade concealment spell formations were placed around it.

Although this spell formation was incapable of escaping the keen notice of a Nascent Soul cultivator, it would escape any passing notice of a Core Formation cultivator.

For Han Li, this would be enough for the time being. After all, there would be no reason for a high grade cultivator to suddenly visit such an trifling medicine garden as this one. Also, these measures were only a temporary affair. Once he refined and placed down a Spirit Constraining Formation, even a Nascent Soul cultivator would be incapable of seeing anything amiss.

After Han Li had finished placing down the spell formations, he placed down the Ninecurl Spirit Ginseng inside his cave residence's small medicine garden. Only after carefully placing down several formidable restrictions around it did he release it from confinement. The Ninecurl Spirit Ginseng was crucial if he was to condense a Nascent Soul.

Following that, Han Li placed the gold-silver Gold Devouring Beetles into the insect room. As for the black-tainted Gold Devouring Beetles, Han Li kept them as his side since he couldn't induce them to reproduce with the Rainbow Skirt Grass.

Neighboring the insect room was a spirit beast room he had specially prepared for the Weeping Soul Beast. Because the beast had consumed such a large quantity of umbra beast souls, it had remained in deep sleep ever since it returned to his storage pouch. Even Han Li was unable to wake it from its slumber.

However, Han Li faintly guessed that because the Weeping Soul Beast had consumed so many souls, it had begun to evolve a grade.

Han Li naturally desired such a outcome. Having acquired a safe haven, Han Li immediately made peaceful arrangements for the beast. At that moment, Han Li also decided to take advantage of the beast's slumber to refine the Weeping Soul Pearl inside his stomach to completion.

Because of the Weeping Soul Beast's soaring advancements, Han Li felt slightly worried that he would be unable to fully control the evolution of the Weeping Soul Beast. During his time in the Umbra Realm, he felt the Weeping Soul Pearl stir several times in his stomach when the Weeping Soul Beast had savagely absorbed the umbra beast souls in his enlarged state.

Although Han Li kept a calm face in front of Fairy Violet Spirit and Mei Ning, he had felt great trepidation. Now that he had the opportunity, there was no way he would dare to allow this to continue.

As for Yuan Yao's explanation of the Weeping Soul Pearl's symptoms, they should pose little problem to Han Li given his superior magic power and spiritual sense. Moreover, the Weeping Soul Beast had unexpectedly ascended two ranks since then, and the symptoms may have disappeared. But regardless, in light of the Weeping Soul Beast's current abilities, it was worth braving the

risk.

With his plans decided, he didn't immediately refine the Weeping Soul Pearl, but instead chose to address another pressing matter, the Wind Spirit Energy inside his body that had yet to scatter.

Feng Xi, the grade nine Windbreaker Beast, naturally couldn't pursue him to the Heavenly South, however, the fact that the Wind Spirit Energy still remained in his body was cause for much distress. Perhaps another incident would occur if too much time had passed, but directly refining this harmful energy didn't seem very possible.

He had tried several times before to little effect. As of current, he only had the clumsy method of using magic power to forcefully expel it. While it was possible, it would take no small amount of time. It was for this reason that Han Li had put it off until now.

Now that he had settled down in a peaceful place, he planned on completely eliminating this danger inside his body. With several huge ape puppets acting as sentries in the medicine garden in order to respond to any sudden visits, he entered his refinement room.

Han Li sat cross-legged in the quiet room with a solemn expression and immersed his spiritual sense into his body.

He examined the lustrous golden light sphere that was contained inside his Dantian and noticed that there was no change.

After a moment of thought, he decided to control the Divine Devilbane Lightning that enveloped the harmful energy and had the net of lightning slowly relax to reveal a gap. The originally calm energy contained within the lightning immediately grew restless and wildly rushed out of the gap.

Just as the strand of harmful energy began to rush out, Han Li's spiritual sense began to stir and had the golden lightning envelope it once more, closing the gap and restraining the remaining Wind

Spirit Energy.

Not knowing what kind of chaotic harmful Qi that the Wind Spirit Energy contained, Han Li felt extremely worried that this sliver could even damage his meridians.

Resisting his feelings of great unease, he circulated all the magic power in his body and began to forcefully expel the sliver of harmful energy.

As he motionlessly sat inside the calm room, large beads of sweat began to flow down from his head and his face paled.

Four hours had unknowingly passed..

Han Li opened his eyes and spiritedly glanced around. He then waved his arms and flicked his fingers, shooting out two drops of grey liquid to the stone walls. Two small holes appeared where they struck.

Han Li let out a long breath of relief and wiped the cold sweat off his forehead.

Although the expulsion process had been incredibly painful and strenuous, it still worked. If he continued this sliver by sliver process of expulsion, he reckoned that it would take half a year before his body was completely free of the Wind Spirit Energy. This had greatly relieved much worry from his mind.

After a moment of rest, Han Li calmly took out a black jade slip from his storage pouch and looked through the method of establishing the Spirit Constraining Formation.

He had always been quite interested in this spell formation but he never had the time to carefully examine it. He now took the opportunity to delve into it as he wouldn't feel truly safe until he had a Spirit Constraining Formation placed around his cave residence.

In the following days, Han Li began to divide his time into several parts. Apart from the four hours he used to expel the Wind Spirit

Energy and a bit of time used to refine the Weeping Soul Pearl, he would spend the rest of his time studying the Spirit Constraining Formation.

As for the outside medicine garden, Han Li had his many puppets tend to it.

Additionally, Han Li continued to exploit the green liquid to mature the Rainbow Skirt Grass and feed it to his Gold Devouring Beetles. He faintly felt that these beetles were about to reproduce once more.

With this monotonous style of life, several months passed in the blink of an eye. During this time, Mu Peiling visited him two times. Once she saw that Han Li had tended to the medicinal garden in accordance to her conditions, she didn't pay much more attention to the garden.

As for the Profound Ice Arts, the woman had no interest in taking the initiative to explain anything as Han Li hadn't raised any questions.

Chapter 605: Bloodshadow Evasion

Mei Peiling had continuously treated Han Li with a neutral indifference during her visits, much as he preferred. It would be best for him to have this woman forget that this medicinal garden ever existed. If she stopped paying him any visits, it would be very convenient for his cultivation.

After yet another month had passed, Han Li eventually grasped a near complete understanding of the Spirit Constraining Formation and immediately placed down a Spirit Constraining Formation around the mountain in accordance to his understanding.

As a result, the faint spiritual Qi fluctuations of the spell formations had completely vanished. From the outside, the small mountain appeared completely ordinary, much to Han Li's satisfaction.

In the next three months, Han Li had eventually fully refined the Weeping Soul Pearl to completion and had expelled the Wind Spirit Energy in its entirety, far quicker than he had expected. But what surprised Han Li the most was how he didn't feel any illness or headaches upon connecting his spiritual sense to the Weeping Soul Pearl when he had completely refined it. He didn't feel any headaches or illness in the slightest. It seemed that the Weeping Soul Beast's unexpected evolution had also caused the deathly Weeping Soul Pearl to also undergo a strange transformation. Han Li was overjoyed by the sight.

As for the harmful Wind Spirit Energy, although it had been difficult and exhausting to expel from his body, once he had expelled a majority of it, it had become far easier to deal with. Not only was the harmful energy less painful to handle, but he was able to expel it from his body in much less time. The last several strands of energy had been extremely easy to rid himself of.

After carefully examining his body several times to find no

abnormalities, Han Li eventually felt relief.

With the most vital matters already taken care of, Han Li brought his attention to cultivation and the medicine pill refined from the Ninecurl Spirit Ginseng.

He pondered several days on the matter of cultivation before deciding to simultaneously cultivate the fourth layer of the Great Development Technique and the Azure Essence Sword Arts. According to his previous experiences with forming a golden core, a powerful spiritual sense seemed to greatly benefit in breaking through bottlenecks. Even if the fourth layer of the Great Development Technique was extremely difficult, Han Li planned on giving it a try.

Even if spiritual sense didn't provide a particularly large benefit in condensing a Nascent Soul, it would at least prove greatly beneficial when confronting an enemy.

While it may somewhat increase the time it would take to reach false Nascent stage, Han Li didn't believe the choice was incorrect as he would only lose a bit of time at the worst.

As for the matter of refining the Ninecurl Spirit Ginseng, Han Li couldn't afford to be negligent. While the other materials were easily replaced, the Ninecurl Spirit Ginseng, the grade eight Demon Echo Grass and the Agate Horn were nowhere to be found in the Heavenly South. If he were to fail in the pill refinement process, Han Li would be left helpless without any alternative.

As a result, Han Li began to study the formula for the Ninecurl Spirit Ginseng in between his cultivation. He often refined a few various pills in accordance to the techniques described in the formula in order to improve his own pill concoction techniques.

Time began to slowly pass by as he repeatedly cultivated and refined pills.

During this period, Han Li had also taken the time to learn

demon script in preparations to comprehend the old hide book and the copper plate in his possession so that he could finally read what they contained. By making use of his eidetic memory, Han Li was able to easily grasp the ancient demon characters and began to look through the details of the hide book.

The old hide book contained a demon art known as the “Nine Gale Transformations”. After taking a look at it, Han Li discovered that the technique was specialized for bird-type demonic beasts. It contained a series of spell arts, body techniques, and two secret techniques.

The spell arts and body techniques were out of the question. Unless a powerful demon were to cultivate it, one would find their body bursting halfway as they cultivated it.

As for the two secret techniques, one of them was the nameless concealment technique that he had been using this entire time, the Hidden Wind Technique. However, the nameless concealment technique was slightly altered from the original in order to become more suitable for human cultivators. It currently held no value to Han Li apart for reference.

However, the other secret technique that was described was of much interest to Han Li, the Bloodshadow Evasion Technique.

As the name implies, Bloodshadow Evasion was a strange movement technique that draws support of one’s blood essence that allowed one to flee over fifty kilometers in an instant.

Secret techniques that drew support of one’s blood essence in order display great abilities were something that most Devil Dao cultivators were capable of. However, this Bloodshadow Evasion was quite different from the secret techniques of humans.

First of all, one is incapable of controlling the distance traveled with this technique. When this technique is activated, one would instantly turn into a crimson blur as they shot over fifty kilometers away.

Secondly, this secret technique required a large, fixed amount of blood essence. Once the technique was activated, the blood essence for this technique would immediately ignite. However, if one lacked enough blood essence to use the technique, the technique would cause one's body to rupture halfway through and turn into a cloud of gore. It was a truly dangerous technique.

Lastly, activating this technique required a pair of wings. Because Bloodshadow Evasion was too fast, without any wings to maintain balance and a particular body lightening technique, the technique could cause one to crash into the earth after traveling only a short distance, or return back to where one started. In brief, a clean escape would be an impossibility without them.

Han Li carefully read through the secret technique several times. No matter how he saw it, he felt that it was very suitable for him to cultivate.

While other humans might not have wings, Han Li had the Thunderstorm Wings. This treasure's spirit wings was no different from true wings.

If the Bloodshadow Evasion was truly as amazing as described, then it was an optimal technique for escaping. After all, the Thunderstorm Wings could only use lightning evasion to travel over small area. It would only be able to flicker incessantly and would be incapable of making a clean escape.

After committing the cultivation method of Bloodshadow Evasion to his memory, he started to look through the copper plate.

The copper plate didn't have a name for its techniques and its description made little sense. Han Li also found the strange cultivation postures unfathomable. After glancing at the techniques it recorded, Han Li was left particularly confused.

After all of this, Han Li faintly recalled what the flood dragon had said. This Divine Provenance Plate seemed to be damaged beyond

use. It was no wonder why he couldn't make sense of the plate.

After realizing this, Han Li grew greatly dispirited and could only put the plate away.

From that day on, Han Li added the Bloodshadow Evasion to his cultivation routine in addition to the Great Development Technique and the Azure Essence Sword Arts.

Although he later felt that he had grasped this technique, he didn't dare to rashly test the magic technique. A great decrease in blood essence wasn't something that could be joked about.

As this continued, half a year had unknowingly passed.

One day, Han Li sat inside a quiet room as he cultivated the Great Development Technique when he suddenly opened his eyes. A strange expression flickered from his face as his body immediately glowed with azure light before immediately shooting out from his cave residence to the medicinal garden.

A short moment later, Han Li was standing in front of the medicine garden's cottage with all of his puppets placed away.

He glanced to the southeast and pensively thought for a moment before taking a seat inside the cottage. He then steeped a cup of tea and assumed a relaxed position.

A short moment later, an extremely polite voice came from outside the medicine garden's restrictions, "Excuse me, could you tell me if Senior Martial Sister Yuan is here? I am the Hidden Sword Sect's Kui Huan." The young man's voice seemed to contain a trace of urgency.

'Senior Martial Sister Yuan? Was that the name of the original caretaker of the medicine garden?'

Han Li's face remained calm as the new arrival shouted several more times. Han Li then downed his cup and slowly replied, "Senior Martial Brother, there is no need to shout. Senior Martial Yuan left this place half a year ago. This medicine garden is now

being cared for by me. If you wish to find her, then you should pay a visit to Martial Aunt Mu's cave residence."

"What? The medicine garden changed caretakers?" The young man was astonished. From his tone, it seemed it wasn't trying to find someone, but he had come to the medicine garden for something else.

The man chuckled and amiably said, "Since Senior Martial Sister Yuan isn't here, then Junior Martial Brother will do. Would Junior Martial Brother release the restrictions so that I may have a chat with you?"

Han Li rubbed his chin. From how elegantly spoken his words were, Han Li had no grounds to refuse him!

After some thought, Han Li walked out from the cottage and took out a yellow command talisman. With a flash of radiance, the mist surrounding the medicine garden began to slowly dissipate.

This revealed a yellow-robed young man that stood in the southeast of the restriction.

The man had thin eyes, thick eyebrows and a large, straight nose. His head was also slightly smaller than normal. Although his appearance couldn't be said to be ugly, his appearance was somewhat comical.

His cultivation was only at the ninth layer of Qi Condensation, somewhat inferior to Han Li's displayed cultivation. It was unknown how this person was able to enter the Drifting Cloud Sect.

Chapter 606: Snowcloud Fox

As Han Li was examining the young man's appearance, he chuckled and walked into the medicine garden. He enthusiastically said, "So Junior Martial Brother is a disciple of Dayspring Mountain. Your face is quite unfamiliar. Could you be a new disciple? In that case, I could genuinely be considered your Senior Martial Brother."

"My surname is Han. I entered the sect earlier this year. Senior Martial Brother must be a brilliant disciple of Hidden Sword Mountain!" Han Li withdrew his gaze and smiled.

"So it's Junior Martial Brother Han. I am Hidden Sword Mountain's Kui Huan. I take care of a nearby spirit beast field along with several other Senior Martial brothers. Junior Martial Brother should pay a visit if he finds an opportunity. Although my cultivation isn't very high, I've been at the sect for eight years and know many of the matters in the Drifting Cloud Sect along with the various disciples of the six mountains. If there is anything you feel unsure of, please don't hesitate to ask me." The man had spoken elegantly the entire way through.

Han Li faintly smiled. The eloquent man reminded him of Little Abacus from all those years ago at the Seven Mysteries Sect. He was also eloquent, smooth at establishing relations and proclaimed himself to be greatly knowledgeable. They were clearly the same kind of person.

While Han Li did find this humorous, he didn't mean any ill will towards him. He crossed his arms and blinked, asking, "Many thanks for your kindness. However, may I ask if Brother Kui has any urgent matters for coming here?"

Kui Huan revealed slight embarrassment and hesitated for a moment. He then rubbed the back of his head and said, "It can't be said to be an important matter. I merely came to ask Senior

Martial Sister Yuan for some help. I just didn't think that the caretaker of the garden for six years would suddenly leave. This has left me in a bit of a difficult situation."

"You want help?" Han Li frowned and revealed a trace of doubt.

"It isn't anything much. Surely Junior Martial Brother knows that since us external affair disciples have inferior aptitudes, we aren't particularly valued. The sects' magic tools and medicine pills naturally won't fall into our hands. A year's worth of hard earned spirit stones isn't even enough to buy a few cultivation progression medicine pills. As such, I along with many other martial brothers go to the nearby Greentrack Marsh and capture a few small rare animals to sell at the market. These Snowcloud Foxes aren't demon beasts, but their petite physique, adorable appearance, and human-like intelligence makes them in high demand with female disciples of the sect. That is why my martial brothers and I struggled to capture a lot of them.

"Not long ago, we discovered a strange Snowcloud Fox that had a faint trace of spiritual Qi on it as if it had transformed into a low grade demon beast. This was naturally cause for joy. If we could capture it alive, it would net over a hundred spirit stones, a rarely seen sum. Unfortunately, we were far too impatient and didn't think things through, allowing the fox to escape. Now, the demon beast had already fled deep into the marsh and is difficult to spot. Although we've searched through a majority of the marsh and occasionally spotted it, it wouldn't allow us to come any closer. It would simply flee deeper inside." With that said, Kiu huan revealed a trace of regret.

When he saw that Han Li wore a pensive expression, he paused for a moment before continuing, "We later left a few people to watch over it for a time and discovered that this strange Snowcloud Fox is fond of eating Huangjing, especially Huangjing that is over ten years old. We reckon that if we wished to lure the beast, we would need Huangjing that is at least fifty years old

before it would fall into our trap. Junior Martial Brother should know that any medicinal herb that is several tens of years old isn't something that can be bought with a few spirit stones. It would require more than a couple dozen!

“While we did have a few savings, we've already pooled them together earlier to buy cultivation medicine. We don't have any spirit stone leftover. Helpless, I could only think of Senior Martial Sister Yuan's medicine garden. It seems there should be two or three [stalks of Huangjing](#) that is at that age. That's why I paid a visit, but I didn't expect that she would be swapped with Junior Martial Brother Han. D-do you think you could spare a stalk of Huangjing for us to use?” When Kui Huan asked his question, his voice grew softer and he somewhat stammered.

It seemed he also knew that this request was somewhat excessive.

After that was said, Han Li's face remained unfathomable. After a short moment of silence, Han Li said, “I do have two stalks of Huangjing that are over fifty years old which are according to your specifications.

“While it stands to reason that since this is the first time Senior Martial Brother Kui has come to seek help, I shouldn't refuse you as your Junior Martial Brother. However, Senior Martial Brother Kui should realize I do not have the authority to give the spirit herbs in this garden. If it were lacking something or if it were to disappear, I wouldn't have anything to say when Martial Aunt asks for them. I fear I would be punished. That is why I cannot help you.”

Han Li's words were quite calm, but the yellow-robed man couldn't help but reveal disappointment.

“Junior Martial Brother, please be at ease. I am only going to borrow this spirit herb for several days. When the time comes, I will be certain to return it to you with thanks. We will also be extremely careful as we transport the spiritual herb so that there

will be no mistakes. Of course, us Senior Martial Brothers won't have you lend the spirit herb for nothing. After this succeeds, we'll be certain to give you a few spirit stones. We won't have you suffer a loss."

"I am sorry! This matter is quite important. I cannot allow you to use this medicinal herb. However, if you are lacking in spirit stones, I do have some saved up. I can lend a few to Senior Martial Brother so you can buy a herb instead." After giving a staunch refusal, Han Li proposed an alternative with a smile.

The yellow-robed man's unsightly expression quickly brightened, "Is Junior Martial Brother serious? If you can lend us spirit stones, it is natural that I won't need the spiritual herbs of your garden. However, a medicinal herb of that age will cost at least thirty spirit stones. Does Junior Martial Brother truly have that much?" His delighted expression soon revealed a trace of doubt. After all, this was by no means a small amount to a Qi Condensation cultivator.

Han Li slowly said, "These spirit stones were saved up before I joined the sect and I've yet to use them. I'll lend them to Senior Martial Brother for now! If these spirit stones could be turned into more, I wouldn't want to miss such a rare opportunity."

"Hehe, so it turned out that Junior Martial Brother Han is an expert in conducting business. Please don't worry about it, Junior Martial Brother. With the Huangjing, that Snowcloud Fox will be practically ours." Kui Huan couldn't help but grin upon finding that Han Li had spoken truthfully.

Han Li smiled and grabbed his storage pouch. He then handed over thirty various colored spirit stones to the young man without any reservations.

Kui Huan received the spirit stones with delight and pledged that they would succeed without problem. With only a bit of idle conversation afterwards, he took his leave with his mind occupied.

As Han Li glanced at the departing young man, Han Li's smile faded away and he shook his head. He naturally didn't value the pledge to bring back the spirit stones in any regard. He merely didn't wish to offend anyone having just arrived at the Drifting Cloud Sect.

Han Li planned on staying at the Drifting Cloud Sect for quite a while. Being acquainted with a well-connected individual such as Kui Huan could prove to be very useful.

With that thought, Han Li reactivated the medicine garden's restrictions and returned back to the the small stone mountain to continue his cultivation.

...

Three days later, Han Li was silently standing in front of an embarrassed Kui Huan.

He wasn't there to return the spirit stones, but rather to request Han Li's help to capture the Snowcloud Fox.

Han Li pursed his lips and doubtfully asked, "You don't have enough people to capture a low grade demon beast?"

Kui Huan chuckled and said, "Junior Martial Brother doesn't know how sly this Snowcloud Fox is, nor does he know how fast it is. Even common flying magic tools are unable to chase it down. We were originally going to have an inner sect Senior Martial Brother lend us a set of Obscure Track Formation tools to deal with the fox, but this Senior Martial Brother was unexpectedly assigned to task yesterday and is no longer present in the sect. As such, we are lacking a member to use the formation. It would cost us quite a few more spirit stones in order to replace him as there aren't others that would be willing. That's why I came to request Junior Martial Brother to assist us. Naturally, we will give Junior Martial Brother a larger share of spirit stones when we succeed."

When Han Li heard this, he stroked his chin and pondered for a

moment. Had Kui Huan come to request his assistance any other time, he would've bluntly refused; there would've been no way he would've wasted his time over such a trivial affair. But a few days before, he had broken through to the fourth layer of the Great Development Technique, and his nerves felt on edge. He had no luck regaining his tranquil temperament ever since.

It seemed this was a sign that he had reached a bottleneck for the Great Development Technique. As such, this may prove to be a good opportunity as bottleneck breakthroughs happened by chance encounters. Perhaps going out would do something for it.

Having thought that, Han Li nodded and said, "Since Senior Martial Brother Kui had spoken as such, I will assist you. I am quite curious where this Greentrack Marsh is." Han Li then lazily smiled.

In English, this herb is known as *Polygonatum sibiricum* or as Solomon's Seal.

Chapter 607: The Greentrack Marsh

Kui Huan was delighted upon hearing Han Li agree to help him. After deciding on a time and place for Han Li to meet his group, he happily departed.

On the dawn of the following day, Han Li activated the restrictions on his cave residence and departed from the medicine garden. He then aloofly flew towards the agreed meeting spot on a flying sword magic tool.

It was quite hilarious. He hadn't used flying magic tools ever since he reached Core Formation stage; it had been many years since he had last used one. This made it quite difficult for Han Li to find an unremarkable high grade magic tool in his storage pouches. He was unable to find any magic tools that were inferior to this one.

After flying for a quarter of a hour, Han Li arrived at the spot where he would meet Kui Huan, the top of a relatively tall hill.

Han Li wasn't particularly surprised to see that no one else was here. He had arrived earlier than was arranged.

Han Li casually found a large, clean rock and sat cross-legged on it before meditating and basking in the nearby Heaven-Earth spiritual Qi.

Two hours later when the blazing sun began to appear over the horizon, several black dots slowly flew across the sky towards the hill. Han Li rubbed his nose at their pitifully slow flight and bitterly laughed.

After more time had passed, the group of people finally arrived on the hill at what Han Li considered to be a snail's pace.

“Junior Martial Brother Han, it is quite considerate of you to have arrived earlier than us.” Kui Huan shouted out to Han Li with a beaming smile. His group was currently flying on low grade disc

magic tools that the sect distributed to all the disciples in the sect. It was no wonder why they were so slow.

Kui Huan then landed on the hill followed by three other Qi Condensation cultivators. Han Li stood up from the rock and turned his gaze to the other three. “It was nothing, I only just arrived. Are these three Senior Martial Brothers the rest of the party?”

“Hehe, with five people, we can assume the Five Elements Obscure Track Formation. There are many people, but a lack of spirit stones. These three are Senior Martial Brothers Ma, Xi, and Wang.” Kui Huan widely smiled as he pointed to the three behind him and gave them a quick introduction.

These three weren’t particularly old. The oldest amongst them was Senior Martial Brother Wang at the age of thirty-five. This man had a confident and scholarly appearance and possessed the highest cultivation among the four, at the eleventh layer of Qi Condensation.

As for the two other youths, one was short and stout while the other had a yellowish face. They appeared to be in their late twenties and both possessed a cultivation at the tenth layer of Qi Condensation.

Senior Martial Brother Wang seemed to possess an unordinary bearing. As soon he was introduced, he widely smiled at Han Li and said, “We’ve already heard about Junior Martial Brother Han. We owe much thanks for your help. If not for you, we would’ve had no means to capture the demon fox.” His eloquent words left quite an impression.

The other two also glanced at Han Li with kind expressions. It seemed they’d gained a rather favorable impression towards Han Li after lending them the spirit stones.

Han Li naturally denied this out of politeness, “Senior Martial Brother is too kind. I merely wished to make more spirit stones.”

The white-robed cultivator surnamed Wang shook his head and sincerely said, “While these spirit stones can’t be considered much to a Foundation Establishment cultivator, to us Qi Condensation disciples, they aren’t such a paltry sum that can be easily lent to a stranger. Junior Martial Brother Han is truly someone that I’d like to be friends with!”

When Han Li heard this, he inwardly nodded and couldn’t help but re-examine this man. Senior Martial Brother Wang’s presence, conduct, and cultivation were all exceptional. He was obviously the leader of this group.

As a result, Han Li smiled and thought to say something else when Kui Huan looked to the sky and suddenly reminded, “Senior Martial Brother Wang, Junior Martial Brother Han, we can talk along the way. If we delay, we’ll reach Greentrack Marsh without much time to catch the Snowcloud Fox. After all, we can’t be away from the sect for too long, and our speed isn’t fast.”

Senior Martial Brother Wang nodded his head and said, “Junior Martial Brother Kui makes sense. We truly have no time to waste so let’s go. If we have an opportunity in the future, let’s have a proper chat.”

The group of five then immediately released their magic tools and took to the skies.

“Yi! Junior Martial Brother Han uses a magic tool that he bought himself. It must be a mid grade magic tool at the very least. Could it be that Junior Martial Brother Han is actually a disciple of a clan?” When the several people took to the skies, they caught sight of Han Li’s flying sword and couldn’t help but shout in surprise.

After all, even if it was a mid grade magic tool, it represented a hefty amount of spirit stones to external affair disciples such as themselves.

When Senior Martial Brother Wang saw this, his face revealed a trace of astonishment. Although he didn’t say anything, a strange

expression flickered across his eyes. The other cultivators also appeared quite flabbergasted.

Having guessed that this would eventually happen, Han Li faintly smiled and said, “How could I possibly come from a clan? It’s just that many years earlier during my time as a vagrant cultivator, I made a few spirit stones by using my shallow skill in refining talismans. Were it not for this, I wouldn’t have been able to afford to so magnanimously lend Senior Martial Brother Kui so many spirit stones.”

Their shock soon turned into that of envy instead.

The short and stout Senior Martial Brother Ma wore an expression of shock and curiously asked, “Talisman refinement? I didn’t expect that Junior Martial Brother Han possessed such skill. Since you were able to earn spirit stones, your skill in talisman refinement must be quite acceptable. What grade of talisman can you refine?”

Han Li indifferently answered, “I mostly refine low-elementary grade talismans. While there are two mid-elementary grade talismans I can refine, their success rate is rather poor.”

“Junior Martial Brother Han can actually refine mid grade talismans?” Senior Martial Brother Wang was greatly moved and couldn’t help but take another glance at Han Li.

Han Li calmly said, “That’s right. I can refine the Thunderfire Talisman and the Guardian Talisman. Unfortunately, I only succeed once in every six attempts. It is barely enough to cover the costs of the materials.”

Senior Martial Brother Wang sighed and regretfully said, “Junior Martial Brother Han is far too modest. From what I know, only a minority of external affair disciples of the talisman centric Fire Cloud Mountain are able to refine mid grade talismans. If Junior Martial Brother Han were to rely on this trade, he would be able to acquire an endless amount of spirit stones. Unlike us, who have to

wrack our brains everyday for a method to acquire spirit stones.”

When the others heard this, their expressions turned dim. His words clearly touched a sore spot.

“You Senior Martial Brothers value me too highly. It’s not like I can refine any high grade talismans. I would have to spend an entire day inside a market and peddle low grade talismans, not knowing when or even if they will be bought. As such, it isn’t much like you think at all. But from my point of view, your business of capturing Snowcloud Foxes is quite impressive.” Han Li’s eyes stirred as he changed the topic.

Having heard this, Kui Huan’s group glanced at each other and soon bitterly smiled. Senior Martial Brother Wang eventually said, “Junior Martial Brother Han might not know this, but this shady business isn’t sustainable. We won’t be coming back to Greentrack Marsh after we capture this demon fox.”

“Why is that?” Han Li asked in astonishment.

Kui Huan explained, “One reason is that we’ve nearly captured all of the Snowcloud Foxes in the marsh. It is too difficult to find the remaining ones. The second reason is because the Snowcloud Foxes aren’t selling anymore. After all, common Snowcloud Foxes aren’t true demon beasts, and there are far too few female disciples that are willing to purchase one. Senior Martial Sisters with superior cultivations are looking to find a demon beast to become their spirit beast.”

“So it’s like that. It seems you Senior Martial Brothers will have to find another way in the future.” A trace of sympathy was revealed from Han Li’s eyes.

When Senior Martial Brother Wang heard this, he shook his head and said little more.

As a result, the five flew out of the range of the Drifting Cloud Sect’s restrictions and headed straight towards the center of the

Dreamcloud Mountains.

“Junior Martial Brother Han, the Greentrack Marsh is a rather neat place. It is located right on the border of the Ancient Sword Sect and our Drifting Cloud Sect. But because this place is somewhat remote and has been plagued by miasma for years, very few disciples ever venture there. As a result, we were able to monopolize the business of capturing the Snowcloud Foxes.

This is a bottle of medicine pills for dispelling the miasma. After we arrive. Junior Martial Brother must take it every so often. Otherwise, you will be constantly vomiting and be plagued with diarrhea.” Along the way, Senior Martial Brother Wang suddenly handed over a small jade bottle to Han Li.

“Many thanks for Senior Martial Brother’s consideration.” Han Li bluntly took the bottle and placed it within his storage pouch. But with his current cultivation, he had nothing to fear from miasma. Who knew if he would actually use the medicine.

After flying for about six hours, they arrived at a tall mountain range. Their eyes suddenly brightened upon seeing a large expanse of verdant valley with trees and shrubbery of all kinds. However, a faint pink fog could be seen amongst the greenery.

“We’re here. Be careful when you descend!” Senior Martial Brother Wang gave a quick warning before landing his magic tool and showing the way through the miasma.

Chapter 608: The Fox's Appearance

Han Li was the last to descend into the valley. Seeing that everyone around him had started to take the miasma treatment pills, he couldn't help but smile. With his body's essence having been purified, any miasma entering his body was cleansed with a single breath.

At that moment, the group was flying straight towards the center of the valley.

“That demon fox is extremely clever, and we will only get one chance to capture it. As such, we must find a wide area so that it cannot escape from the formation. There is a flat field free of mud not far ahead of us. We won't have to fear it running away by digging into the mud.” From Senior Martial Brother Wang's plans, it seemed he had deliberated much about this matter.

Having followed Senior Martial Brother Wang this long, the others in the group naturally raised no objections. As for Han Li, he merely smiled and remained silent.

A short moment later, the five arrived in a lush, flat field with short shrubbery sparsely scattered about.

Without waiting for Senior Martial Brother Wang's instruction, Kui Huan and the others landed on the field and examined their nearby surroundings.

Following a quick discussion, Kui Huan walked to the center of the field and dug open a small hole. He then carefully took out the Huangjing that he bought from the market and shallowly buried it in the hole so that it slightly emerged from the ground. Afterwards, he sprinkled a bit more dirt on top to make it look a bit more natural. A faint medicinal aroma immediately began to spread out.

“Good, that will do. The Snowcloud Fox has a very keen sense of

smell. Even if the Huangjing is three feet buried, the Snowcloud Fox will surely smell its aged medicinal scent.” Kui Huang stood up and dusted off his hands with satisfaction. He then recalled something and took out a white formation flag. “Ah right, Junior Martial Brother, take this. It’s an Obscure Track Formation flag.”

Han Li nodded his head and calmly received the small flag. At that moment, Senior Martial Brother Wang began to brief the party.

He solemnly said, “In a moment, everyone will take up a position on higher ground. When the demon fox appears, we’ll all use the formation flags at the same time and envelope the field in an illusion formation. I am confident that since the Snowcloud Fox only recently turned into a demon beast, it will not be able to flee from the formation.”

All the others nodded their heads in agreement before taking off on their flying magic tools. They all motionlessly floated about a hundred-fifty meters in the air with formation flags in their hands. They each used shallow invisibility magic techniques to conceal themselves as they waited.

Since this involved such a large amount of spirit stones, Kui Huan and the others each appeared rather nervous as they unblinkingly stared down below. Even Senior Martial Brother Wang wore a grave expression as he deeply stared.

In contrast, Han Li was the most calm amongst them. He was holding the white formation flag in a single hand as he swept his gaze around. In fact, Han Li had already enveloped the area of a kilometer around them with his spiritual sense. He would be the first to know if any winds blew or any bush shook.

The area became deathly silent as two hours passed by. Kui Huan’s neck began to ache as he stood on his magic tool from continuously watching down below. His face revealed faint impatience. He glanced at Senior Martial Brother Wang and

thought to say something to him, but after some hesitation, he shut his mouth upon further thought. There was nothing to complain about even if they had to wait a while longer. This was all in order to capture the demon fox.

After yet another hour passed by, most of the group began to feel anxious. As for Han Li, his expression began to stir as he stared at a patch of nearby shrubbery.

At that moment, Kui Huan couldn't help but stir. He licked his lips and was about to say something when he heard Han Li's cold voice through a voice transmission, "Be careful, the demon fox has already arrived. It is hiding in a bush to the west. Don't scare it away."

The other three also heard Han Li's voice transmission.

In response, all of them glanced at the west bushes in alarm only to discover that nothing strange could be seen. They couldn't help but be skeptical of Han Li's words, but their relaxed attitudes became vigilant once more.

After the time it took to finish a meal, surprise was clear in their eyes as a foot-long, snow-white beast slowly walked out from a bush. It turned its head around with each step and its whiskers occasionally twitched in hopeful anticipation. It was incredibly adorable.

Upon seeing this, the other four grew vigilant and nervously grasped the formation flags in their hands.

The white fox didn't glance up at the five. After seeing that there was nothing strange in its surroundings, it grew slightly more courageous and it began to silently walk in the direction of the Huangjing.

However, when it arrived about thirty meters away from the Huangjing, it suddenly stopped and its small pink nose suddenly sniffed the air. A trace of doubt flickered in its eyes as if it had

discovered something.

This scene had caused Senior Martial Wang to lose his calm and he loudly shouted, “Now!” His formation flag dropped to the ground in a streak of yellow light. When Han Li and the others heard this, they threw down the formation flags without hesitation and each uttered several incantations.

Five different lights began to shine from the flags as soon as they touched the ground. A large expanse of yellow mist then enveloped the field, sealing it from every direction. The Five Elements Obscure Track Formation had taken effect.

When the Snowcloud Fox saw this, it naturally knew that it was trapped. It immediately released several panicked howls and turned into a white blur as it shot into the yellow mist in an attempt to escape.

The group of cultivators appeared somewhat relieved upon seeing this, but they didn’t relax just yet. The illusion formation merely changed the direction of the white fox so that it turned in circles and stayed within the formation. The cultivators naturally wished to exhaust the beast first before they set to capturing it.

The group of people beamingly smiled as if this operation was a success. After the small fox ran around inside the yellow mist, it suddenly blurred several times before collapsing to the ground. It no longer stood up.

When the others saw this, they couldn’t help but feel frightened and looked at each other in dismay.

Senior Martial Brother Wang’s face grew sullen and he calmly said, “Do not release the restriction. We will continue to maintain it. Junior Martial Brother Ma, go down and see what is happening. The Obscure Track Formation is only able to trap, it does not cause harm. From the fox’s sly nature, it is most likely pretending to be dead.”

The others were greatly relieved upon hearing him and the youth surnamed Ma wordlessly descended.

Han Li faintly smirked at the scene and glanced down with a mysterious smile.

The short and stout Senior Martial Brother Ma was rather fast. After a short moment, he had entered the yellow mist and was several steps away from the fox.

He carefully grabbed the white fox tail and boldly shook it several times. The white fox was unresponsive as if it were truly dead.

As a result, the youth surnamed Ma felt slightly panicked and immediately pressed his ear against the beast's chest.

Soon after, Senior Martial Brother Ma flusteredly shouted from within the mist, "Senior Martial Brother, quickly come down, the demon fox's body is ice-cold. Perhaps its heart has stopped from fright!"

"Impossible!" Senior Martial Brother Wang couldn't help but change his expression.

Kui Huan nervously said, "Senior Martial Brother, let's release the spell formation and take another look. Our spiritual power cannot sustain the restriction for much longer."

The cultivator surnamed Xi remained silent but a trace of worry appeared in his eyes. The demon beast wouldn't be worth much if it were dead.

After a moment of hesitation Senior Marital Brother Wang nodded his head and said, "Fine! We'll release the spell formation since Junior Martial Brother Ma has already grabbed onto the spirit beast."

When Han Li heard this, he calmly rubbed his chin, but he didn't display the slightest opposition.

Suddenly, the cultivators began to mutter some words and point

to the ground, causing four of the flags to shoot back into their hands as streaks of light.

In the instant the yellow mist dissipated, a short and stout youth placed his finger on the small beast's nose as if he were testing something.

The three dropped down with sullen expressions. However, Han Li remained standing in his original position as he glanced at the white fox down below. His face revealed an odd expression.

Chapter 609: The Chase

Before Senior Martial Wang and the other two descended, the youth surnamed Ma had already placed his finger on the white fox's nose and angrily cursed, "Damn! This thing isn't breathing! Don't tell me that it died for nothing."

With that said, he raised his head to the three and was about to say something more with an angry face.

The three that were descending suddenly had their expressions greatly changed as they shouted, "Careful! The demon fox is alive! It was only playing dead!"

The three all shouted different words, but their meanings were all the same.

The short and stout youth was rather quick-witted, and his expression abruptly changed upon hearing them. His hand instantly blurred and a white talisman appeared between his fingers. He fiercely slapped the talisman onto the fox's tail.

However, his actions were clearly too slow. As soon as he extended his hand holding the talisman, he felt a sharp pain coming out from the hand that held onto the fox.

He loudly shouted as he unconsciously released his grip. The fox slipped away and rolled onto the ground.

In the blink of an eye, the fox's tail had become erect and its fur became the same as needles. The youth's hand was now filled with holes and dripping with blood.

When the other three saw this, they flew towards the small beast in furious alarm.

The white fox wasn't about to easily be captured. It scuttled away and turned into a white streak as it shot forty meters away. With several hops, it fled back into the shrubbery.

In a moment of desperation, Senior Martial Brother Wang and the other two surrounded the bush and released their magic tools as they slowly combed through it.

But after a short moment, the three revealed astonishment. Apart from a pile of stones, there was nothing else in the bushes. The white fox had clearly disappeared without a trace. The three then despondently stood in place.

Kui Huan unconsciously turned his gaze to the sky and shouted in alarm, “Yi! Where is Junior Martial Brother Han going?” At that moment, the others also discovered that Han Li was quickly flying off into the distance.

Han Li’s voice transmission soon arrived at their ear, “There is no need for Senior Martial Brothers to be so flustered. That fox slipped away using a vision obscuring technique and dug into the earth. Right now, I am using a magic tool to track it down. Once it comes back up, I’ll capture it alive.” With that said, Han Li flew off towards the edge of the marsh.

When Senior Martial Brother Wang heard him, he grew delighted and called out to the others before impatiently chasing after Han Li. The other three were close behind him.

As they hurried along their way, Senior Martial Brother Wang turned his head around and asked, “Junior Martial Brother Ma, how is your hand?”

The short, stout youth was at the very rear. He muttered with a shameful expression, “It’s still good. Fortunately, the fox’s tail didn’t have any poison. It’s merely a superficial wound.” After all, it was his carelessness that had resulted in the fox’s escape. Additionally, the issue had been called to attention by someone, causing him to feel quite embarrassed.

Senior Martial Brother Wang forced a smile and said, “That’s good. Let’s quicken our pace. Although I don’t know what kind of magic tool Junior Martial Brother Han is using to track the

underground movements of the demon fox, we should hurry after him.”

Kui Huan turned around and repeatedly nodded his head in agreement. With an odd tone, he said, “Nevertheless, the intelligence of this evolved Snowcloud Fox is truly too much. Even Senior Martial Brother Ma couldn’t tell that the beast was playing dead. It was quite a shock.”

Grabbing onto his wounded hand, the cultivator surnamed Ma deeply blushed.

Fortunately at that moment, Senior Martial Brother Wang spoke up for him, “We cannot blame Junior Martial Brother Ma. Even if I had been the one to check, things might’ve ended up the same. It’s just that the Snowcloud Fox was too sly.”

Having heard that, the youth surnamed Ma shot an appreciative glance at Senior Martial Brother Wang and felt much better.

As the three were talking, the youth surnamed Xi suddenly wore an incredulous gaze and suddenly shouted, “Everyone, quickly look! Junior Martial brother Han drilled through the stone wall. Wh-what should we do?”

The others glanced ahead in alarm and discovered that the marsh’s end lie ahead of them. A kilometer ahead of them, there was a mountain so huge that its peak couldn’t be seen. There was a cliff that faced them that had its black walls cut through with a sword.

Furthermore, Han Li was nowhere to be found. The four stood in front of the cliff and glanced inside the opening that had been cut with dumbfounded expressions.

Han Li had truly gone inside the mountain.

At that moment, he was holding a jade scepter with a wolf’s head that enveloped his body in a faint yellow radiance. There was a meter long yellow wolf in front of him that was opening a path

with an earth movement technique.

As the artifact spirit continued forward, the earth parted as if there was nothing there. Han Li followed after the wolf with a pensive appearance on his face.

Underneath the scope of his spiritual sense, Han Li saw the white fox strive its hardest to continue forward as it blurred a hundred meters beneath him.

With his profound abilities, it was only natural for him to see through the Snowcloud Fox's act. He even saw how the fox took advantage of a stone vein in the shrubbery to slip away.

If this were a common low grade demon beast, Han Li would've naturally warned the disciples as a favor. But Han Li was quite surprised to see that when the spirit fox revealed itself, it possessed spiritual Qi fluctuations that felt quite familiar to Han Li.

In his astonishment, he carefully examined it and found that the beast faintly carried the same spiritual Qi fluctuations as the Ninecurl Spirit Ginseng's incarnation, the white rabbit.

Han Li was delighted, believing that he had discovered another incarnation of a spiritual object. But after he examined the white fox once more, he grew somewhat puzzled.

The spiritual Qi fluctuations of the fox were far too small in comparison with the Ninecurl Spirit Ginseng. The difference between them could be said to be as wide as heaven and earth. Moreover, upon deeper inspection, he found that the Snowcloud Fox possessed a true flesh body, not that of a spiritual incarnation. Otherwise, the trifling Obscure Track formation wouldn't have been able to contain it.

Although the small fox wasn't a spiritual incarnation in the end, Han Li was still deeply curious about it. He was certain that this pure spiritual Qi had something to do with how this ordinary beast was able to turn into a demon beast.

Having decided to investigate this fully, he allowed the fox to escape from the Qi Condensation cultivators and slowly followed after it, wishing to investigate the secrets of the fox.

When the fox had arrived in front of the cliff, it had turned into a ball of white light and blurred into the ground without hesitation. As a result, Han Li summoned the earth attribute artifact spirit from the jade scepter and had the wolf silently open a path. Else, if he were to use a flying sword to cut into a mountain, the fox would be scared away.

The mountain was obviously large. Han Li followed the white fox for at least a kilometer before it stopped, appearing inside what seemed to be a stone room.

Han Li rejoiced and hastily ordered the yellow wolf to hurry and clear a path. At the same time, Han Li increased the power of his spiritual sense and began to examine the inside of the room.

However, as soon as his spiritual sense neared the room, it was repelled by a strange force and he was unable to move it any further.

“Yi!” Han Li shouted out in surprise. His rush came to a stop and he suddenly grew careful.

At that moment, he felt his body grow still and heavy as if it were bearing the weight of Mount Tai itself. He then heard an insipid voice, “Since a guest has come, there is no need to be overly cautious. Don’t tell me that you’re waiting for this elder to invite you in?”

Just as this was said, countless yellow lights began to appear around him as a huge force pushed him forward.

Han Li merely saw a flash of light before he found himself inside the stone room. He was greatly alarmed and instantly waved the jade scepter, covering himself in a red-yellow barrier of light. At the same time, he opened his mouth and spat out a dozen streaks of

azure light that hurriedly revolved around him outside the barrier.

It was only after this that Han Li could finally feel secure enough to look around.

Chapter 610: Black-Clothed Young Woman

Without much effort, Han Li spotted the owner of the voice. About forty meters in front of him, there was a young, black-clothed woman sitting cross-legged on a stone platform.

The woman had a graceful appearance, but her complexion was deathly pale and her luminous eyes seemed to glow with sparkling light. Han Li was shocked to see that one of her sleeves was empty. She was missing an arm.

Before Han Li said anything, the young woman revealed shock upon seeing Han Li release his magic treasures.

The young woman chuckled and her bright eyes stirred. “So it turned out that your esteemed self wasn’t a Qi Condensation Junior, but a Core Formation cultivator. Your Qi Restraint Technique is truly impressive. It even tricked me for a moment.”

As she sat, the Snowcloud Fox was comfortably sitting in her lap and was curiously examining Han Li with an intelligent gaze.

After sweeping his spiritual sense past her, Han Li’s heart trembled. “So it turned out that this was Senior’s hidden cultivation area. I am truly lacking in manners.”

She appeared to be rather open and allowed his spiritual sense to easily sweep past her. He wasn’t able to discover the slightest spiritual Qi fluctuations. From what he had gathered based on her abilities and tone, this indicated that her cultivation was truly too great, not that she had some sort of cultivation concealing treasure.

Han Li grew greatly vigilant.

As Han Li pondered over how to deal with the situation, the young woman raised her flawless pale hand and caressed the Snowcloud Fox. She leisurely said, “It appears that your age is quite young yet you’ve already reached late Core Formation stage.

That is quite exceptional.”

Han Li took a deep breath and calmly said, “Senior flatters me. Junior was only able to reach this stage through sheer luck. Might I know Senior’s esteemed name?”

The young woman sighed and said, “My name isn’t anything special. If I said it, you wouldn’t know of it. Let alone you, even this generation’s Nascent Soul cultivators wouldn’t know of it.”

When Han Li heard this, he felt a bitter taste in his mouth. Could it be that this young woman was an old eccentric that had remained isolated in her cultivation?

Although Han Li’s heart grew cold, he didn’t reveal the slightest trace of panic. After all, he now possessed a great number of secret techniques, especially the recently learned Bloodshadow Evasion Technique. With this, Han Li no longer held much fear towards Nascent Soul cultivators. Of course, Han Li knew he’d be no match for one in a fight, but he was confident he could escape. However, the aftermath of igniting a large quantity of blood essence would force him to remain in secluded cultivation for many years.

That being said, Han Li had no idea why this mysterious character had hidden herself beneath the three sects. Was it because she had some sort of plot in mind, or was she like himself, only wishing to cultivate in a place with dense spiritual Qi?

Han Li swept his gaze around the stone room and astonishedly discovered that this room inside the mountain was sealed, and lacked any doors or passageways. Additionally, apart from the stone platform that the young woman was sitting on, there wasn’t any other furniture. The room’s emptiness gave an extremely icy impression.

Han Li also discovered that the room’s walls were extremely crude, unlike the common clean cuts of a blade. Rather, these uneven surfaces seemed to come from the wanton swings of a huge axe.

As soon as he saw this, a strange expression flickered in his eyes. As if having seen through Han Li's confusion, the young woman suddenly smiled and said, "Since Fellow Daoist is puzzled, why not touch the stone walls and dispel your doubts?"

When Han Li heard this, his heart stirred. He was truly curious. His recent scan with his spiritual sense discovered nothing strange. The room's walls appeared no different than ordinary stone. "Since Senior has raised the topic, I won't be restraining myself."

He slowly reached his left hand towards the stone wall. But to be careful, Han Li continued to observe the young woman with his spiritual sense, fearing she would launch an attack out of greed. Although she hadn't shown any malice, Han Li had lived through many years of hardship and had grown to become extremely careful.

When Han Li felt the stone wall, he noticed nothing strange. Then after some thought, he extended his finger and had a streak of azure swordlight emerge from the tip of his finger.

Han Li stabbed his finger into the wall and shockingly discovered that the stone wall had completely blocked the attack. All that had resulted was a crackle when the light touched the wall.

Han Li was dumbstruck, but at the same time, a trace of disbelief arose in his mind. His spiritual power surged as he suddenly struck the stone wall with a foot long swordstreak.

As a result, the wall remained completely unharmed without even the slightest scratch.

Han Li remained silent as an odd expression flickered across his face. He then pointed to one of his flying swords and had it strike the wall as an azure streak. Afterwards, it flew back with a clear ring.

The strike had left an inch deep cut but the wall started to slowly smooth itself. After a short moment, the cut had disappeared

without a trace.

Han Li gasped in shock and couldn't help but turn his head towards her, asking, "What is this? How can it restore itself? Could it be that Senior placed it under the influence of a restriction or spell?"

The young woman indifferently said, "Spells? Restrictions? You think too highly of me; this is merely Lapis Stone. Also known as Spirit Absorbing Stone, it is an incredibly rare tool refinement material. It is impervious to the spiritual power of magic techniques and treasures, and only great strength can harm it."

Han Li faintly frowned and turned back towards the stone wall. He slowly said, "Lapis Stone? This Junior is quite inexperienced and ignorant. I haven't heard of such a material before."

The young woman casually explained, "Hehe, it is natural for Fellow Daoist to not hear of this material. This material was incredibly rare even during the era of antiquity, and there aren't many that presently know of it."

When Han Li heard this, he was flabbergasted. Just as he thought to say something else, the young woman sweetly smiled and interrupted him, "Although Fellow Daoist's cultivation is nearing the false Nascent stage, your aptitude seems inferior. No, it would be better to say that it is terrible. It seems you've come across fateful encounters to be able to reach this stage of cultivation. Otherwise, your greatest efforts would've only taken you to the Foundation Establishment stage. Meeting me could also be considered an act of fate. If you don't find the idea undesirable, this elder has a treasure that I can lend to you."

As soon as Han Li heard her, he revealed a odd expression, "Lend this Junior a treasure?"

As if seeing through Han Li's suspicions, her expression sunk and she coldly said, "Of course, there will be conditions. First, this item will only be lent. You will have to return it. Secondly, after taking

the treasure, there is something you must carry out on my behalf as payment for it.”

She rummaged through her robes for a moment before taking out a jade box in her hand.

The jade box was pitch-black and only the size of a fist. Its exterior was incredibly rough and crude, but there was a trace of yellow within the black. It seemed to be incredibly old.

Han Li glanced at the young woman’s face before turning his gaze back to the black case. Still silent, his expression fluctuated for a moment as he pondered for a moment. He then gravely asked, “Could Senior first tell this Junior what is inside the box before he decides?”

Upon seeing Han Li’s hesitation, the black-clothed woman revealed a trace of impatience. With her brow raised, she pointed at the black box and said, “Surely you must know what a spirit well is. This box happens to hold a spirit well stone of the highest rank, known as a jade spirit well. At the very least, its spiritual Qi should allow you to further stabilize your cultivation at the false Nascent stage. It will allow you to condense a Nascent Soul with greater ease. This treasure has been with me for many years. If not for my current cultivation and my current inability to further use it, I wouldn’t be lending it to you.”

With that said, she stroked the black jade box with a reluctant expression.

“Jade spirit well!” Han Li’s expression changed several times. This would cut down the time it would take for him to reach false Nascent stage by two-thirds! He completely swallowed his original words to reject her.

After some hesitation, Han Li sighed and said, “Might I ask what Senior would like Junior to do? If you can’t do something with your current cultivation, how could I possibly help you?!”

The young woman revealed an expression of joy seeing that Han Li was willing to agree. “Be at ease! I’m not asking you to kill someone. I’m only asking you to run errands. Although my cultivation is great, I cannot depart from this room for a certain reason. I only want you to deliver a letter for me.”

“You only wish for me to deliver a letter?” This was completely beyond his expectations.

“Of course. Did you really believe that I’d have you kill someone?” The black-clothed woman covered her smile, revealing an overwhelming allure.

Chapter 611: A Golden Talisman

When Han Li heard this, he faintly blushed.

“If it’s only to deliver a letter, Junior is willing to accept.” It was only natural for him to accept such a trivial task, considering the reward.

The young woman seemed rather happy and raised her hand without another word. The box was wrapped in a green light and smoothly flew over to Han Li.

Han Li received the black box and swept his spiritual sense over it. The spiritual Qi within the box was truly abundant as if it really contained a jade spirit well. Of course, given Han Li’s cautious nature, he wanted to personally examine what was inside the box.

With a flash of azure light from his hand, the black box opened by itself to reveal a dense, white mist of extremely pure spiritual Qi, flooding the stone room in an instant.

Han Li’s heart stirred and he examined the inside of the box with suspicion.

He only saw a gentle white light that emitted from a sparkling white jade stone only several inches long.

Han Li was left startled not by the stone itself, but by the thumb-sized cow inside the transparent stone that was continuously wagging its tail as if it were alive.

When the young woman saw Han Li’s shock, a peculiar expression flickered from her bright eyes. She casually smiled and asked, “What’s the matter? This jade spirit well had quickly nurtured a treasure incarnation. Common spirit well stones are incomparable to it. If you were to cultivate with this, you would achieve twice the results with half the effort.”

After taking another glance at the jade spirit well inside the box, he eventually closed it and calmly raised his head. “Right. With

this item, Junior would only spend about a dozen years to reach false Nascent stage instead of several tens.”

At that moment, Han Li had finally realized that the Jadecloud Fox had been stained by the jade spirit well’s spiritual Qi. That was why it had possessed such a faint, pure spiritual Qi. It was quite possible that its transformation into a demon had something to do with the spirit well.

Han Li’s regained calm somewhat surprised the young woman. She couldn’t help but take another glance at him in her astonishment.

After drawing away a loose hair from her forehead, she casually said with an insipid voice, “Alright, since I’ve already given this item to you, I’ll be giving you the jade slip to deliver as well. There is also another jade box below on the platform I am sitting on. Tear off the talisman that seals it and hand it to me. There is a token in the box that I want you to deliver with it.”

“You want Junior to take it for you?” Han Li revealed suspicion and grew vigilant.

“Humph! Still afraid this old woman means you harm? If I could grab it myself, would I ask you to do it?” The young woman resentfully smiled and lifted up her long robes with her hand.

Han Li’s expression greatly changed upon seeing her legs. They were shriveled like firewood as they were crossed together. There wasn’t the slightest flesh apart from some dried up skin. It made for a rather fearsome appearance. But what surprised Han Li even more was the several silver sparkling chains that penetrated her legs that deeply bore into the stone platform..

Han Li pursed his lips and raised his head to look at the young woman. Although his face appeared completely bewildered, he didn’t ask anything further. He knew that the woman was certain to offer the explanation.

As a result, the woman's face grew icy and she placed her robes back down. She dryly said, "I am in this stone mountain for the Lapis Stone. I had a room of it and then I used the two chains to restrict my legs and trap myself here."

"You trapped yourself?" Han Li was entirely confused by this.

"That's right. My cultivation art is the Underworldly Slaughter Arts. Although the cultivation art is incredibly fast and its might is extraordinary, it has a fatal flaw. Once it is completed, the cultivator will easily lose their human nature and become bloodthirsty. Back then, I had a fateful encounter with this technique and decided to cultivate it despite the advice of others; I had been extremely confident of my exceptionally powerful spiritual sense. After I successively cultivated this technique and entered Nascent Soul stage, I was no longer able to restrain my urge to kill and swept through the cultivation world at the time in a massive storm, resulting in no small number of enemies. As a result, I finally tangled in a battle with several Nascent Soul cultivators, resulting in the loss of my arm."

The young woman expressionlessly glanced at her vacant arm and shook her head.

"After receiving this injury, I thought long and hard. If I had no way to control myself then I would die sooner or later. As a result, I steeled my resolve and asked my dear friends to forge the Divine Heavenfire Chains and the room of Lapis Stone to imprison me. Due to fear I wouldn't be able to tolerate the loneliness or would suddenly become regretful, I gave the key to the chains to my best friend. They made a promise that they would come visit me every so often to see whether or not I've gotten better so that they may release me."

After that was said, the young woman's expression grew sullen.

"But I didn't expect that after coming only a few times, my good friend would suddenly disappear without a single word. I don't

know whether or not they became impatient or if something unexpected happened to them. As such, I've been imprisoned here until now. Because this room was refined from Lapis Stone, my spiritual sense is only able to reach out about a kilometer, despite having already reached the mid Nascent Soul stage. I wished to call for help, but I lacked any method to. These Divine Heavenfire Chains were refined through a very peculiar method, connecting them to my primal soul. Although my cultivation has greatly increased and I am able to break the chains, I will instantly die from doing so. Now that destiny has had us meet, it seems the Heavens have heard my plea. I no longer have to waste the rest of my life in this stone room."

The black-clothed woman gave a general explanation of her past to dispel Han Li's suspicions.

However, the story left Han Li dumbstruck. If she spoke truly, then her past must've truly been unfathomable.

After a moment of deliberation, he hesitantly asked, "Could it be that Senior wishes for Junior to deliver a letter to your best friend? With so many years having passed, it wouldn't be unlikely for your friend to have passed on!"

The young woman sighed and bitterly smiled, "That's right. Even if that's the case, there is no need to be worried. I just ask that you to bring the key for the Divine Heavenfire Chains. We were on good terms. If anything had happened, they should've passed it on to their descendants for safekeeping. It'll be the same if you found their descendants instead."

After a moment more of thought, Han Li found this to be reasonable and that there were no gaps in logic. As a result, he stepped forward without speaking any useless words and circled around the stone platform to find a hole.

Han Li carefully probed it with his spiritual sense and he raised his brows. He reached in to find a jade box.

The jade box had an antique style and was a faint yellow with odd flames engraved on it. The silhouette of a person could be seen standing within those flames as if they were roaring towards the Heavens.

There was also a flickering golden talisman on the jade box that faintly emitted an aura that caused Han Li to feel uneasy. He unconsciously frowned.

The black-clothed woman couldn't help but grow excited and said, "That's the box! Fellow Daoist, tear off the talisman and let me look at it."

Han Li had already placed his hand on the jade case and was about to tear the talisman off. However, when he the young woman's voice trembled in uncontrollable excitement, Han Li felt an indescribable feeling of dread.

After a moment of hesitation, Han Li withdrew his hand from the box and raised his head instead. Han Li's heart thumped upon seeing her.

Her eyes had changed into a dark green and her appearance had become warped. A fearsome, menacing guise had completely replaced her previously dignified air.

When the young woman saw Han Li raise his head, she was startled and regained her awareness. Her warped appearance and green eyes disappeared in an instant. She said in a relaxed tone, "Fellow Daoist, why are you looking at me? Why haven't you torn off that talisman? Don't forget, the jade spirit well is a treasure rarely seen in this world and I've already given it to you. Why are you still hesitating?"

Han Li glanced at the black-clothed young woman and looked down at the golden talisman tightly sealing the jade box. Without saying anything further, he narrowed his eyes and slowly walked towards her with the jade box in hand.

“Fellow Daoist, what are you going? Stop! Don’t come closer!”
When the woman saw Han Li walking over with the golden talisman still on the jade box, her expression immediately changed and she began to shout with a panicked expression.

Chapter 612: Cadaver Demon

When Han Li saw the young woman's reaction, his expression immediately became gloomy and a cold glint appeared in his eyes. He wordlessly raised the box as he approached her.

Although he didn't know why she was so scared of this talisman, he knew she wasn't harboring any good intentions toward him, and he decided to drop any formalities.

The black-clothed young woman had completely lost her mind to fear as he approached and instantly slapped the stone platform beneath her to launch herself away. However, this action activated some sort of restriction. Just as she reached three meters away, red light enveloped her and brought her back to her original position.

At that moment, the jade box flew out of Han Li's grasp and released a series of clear rings as it flew towards the woman's head. The golden talisman on the box flourished with radiance and released countless golden talisman characters that slowly floated down towards the young woman.

"NO!" The black-clothed woman shouted in despair. Her beautiful appearance warped in an instant. She quickly used her sole arm to cover her face and dropped her head down to her chest, desperately trying to keep her face away from the talisman.

As the golden talisman characters finally dropped down to the young woman's shoulder, golden light sparked and released a wisp of green smoke.

The young woman's body greatly trembled as she released a monstrous wail of anguish. The wail was deafeningly sharp and inhuman, much to Han Li's shock. He unconsciously took several steps back and he felt cold sweat line his palm. In one hand he tightly grabbed onto his spirit beast pouch with the Gold Devouring Beetles and tightly clutched onto the jade scepter with the other as he solemnly stared at the stone platform.

As further talisman characters fell onto the black-clothed young woman, even more green smoke began to surge from her body. After a short moment, the green smoke had enveloped her. Her body could no longer be seen, but the flashes of light and wails never ceased. In a moment, the wails became screeching; in another, they became frantically hoarse. The sudden and unceasing transformations of the monstrous wails were awful to behold.

As Han Li watched in apprehension, he held his breath and pursed his lips. A fishy scent had filled with room as soon as the green smoke appeared. Each breath of it immediately caused him to feel a wave of dizziness and nausea, much to his surprise. The smoke seemed to be extremely poisonous.

Soon after, cracks began to sound out from within the green smoke.

Han Li was startled. Before he realized what those sounds were, he heard a swish of wind.

A dark green claw that was tangled in silver chains suddenly extended from the mist at the speed of lightning and fiercely swiped towards Han Li at the corner of the room. The claw was as flexible as a snake, suddenly bending and reaching out ten meters towards Han Li trying to grab him.

Han Li trembled and his grip tightened on the jade scepter. Just as he thought to execute a technique, the silver chains suddenly restrained the ghostly claws in a storm of sparks, filling the room with a scorched stench.

A painful moan roared from within the smoke and the sharp claw quickly withdrew.

Han Li stared into the mist with tightly shut lips, his expression continuously fluctuating. After some consideration, Han Li's expression grew sullen and he drew back with two additional steps. With the Lapis Stone wall close against his back, he poured a

great amount of spiritual energy into the jade scepter, thickening the red-yellow light barrier around his body and causing him to feel somewhat more at ease.

After the time it took to brew a cup of tea, yet another monstrous scream left the mist, and the radiance of the jade box's golden talisman gradually dimmed. The amount of talisman characters it produced had also started to grow sparse.

With all that he had seen, Han Li mused, 'It seems the golden talisman is capable of restraining either ghosts or demons, but it has a rather limited amount of spiritual Qi. It will eventually expire and will no longer be able to restrain her.'

Fortunately, Han Li's worries were unfounded.

In the following moment, the final scream faded away and the smoke had grown still. However, the golden talisman's light had yet to fade away.

Han Li glanced at the golden talisman and didn't immediately approach it. Instead, he waited for a moment more. After the golden light faded away and the jade box fell into the dense smoke, Han Li's expression began to stir.

He waved his arm and put away the spirit beast pouch for the time being. He then formed an incantation seal with the newly freed hand and began to mutter something in a low voice. In the following instant, a red, egg-sized fireball appear in front of him.

After taking a glance at the fireball, Han Li pointed into the smoke and the fireball flew into the green smoke as a streak of red light. He raised his brows and uttered, "Explode."

Boom! The smoke was swept up in a gale and was scattered in an instant, only to be replaced with a burnt stench.

As expected, fire attribute techniques were the most effective means of dealing with poisonous Qi.

Han Li stood in place as he felt hot winds blow against him. A

strange expression stirred in his eyes as he stared at the stone platform while the smoke cleared away. When he eventually saw what was there, he felt his heart jump and he dryly swallowed as a shiver went down his spine.

There was a human-shaped silhouette on the platform that remained still, and it was unknown whether it was still alive.

Although it could be said to be human-shaped, there was dense green fur covering its body. Additionally, it smelled very much like a rotting corpse.

Although he didn't see what it truly was, it was absolutely not human.

Like its human form, it had only one arm, but this arm was much longer and had pitch-black claws. This was clearly what had attacked Han Li earlier.

What was even more notable were the many chains that wrapped around its body. Not only did they bind its legs and arm, but it also pierced through its chest and back. It had been entirely restrained.

Without much further thought, Han Li pointed to his flying swords and had them pierce into the monster.

As a result, a series of muffled clangs sounded out. The green fur had repelled them without harm.

Han Li wryly smirked, but he didn't feel particularly surprised. Given what heavy restrictions the monster was subjected to, Han Li would've been somewhat astonished if that had actually cleaved off its head. It couldn't have possibly been that simple.

Han Li waved to the swords and had them fly back towards him. He then took a few steps forward and lightly flung his sleeve towards the green haired monster. At that moment, an azure mist of light shot out from Han Li's sleeve and gently enveloped the monster, resulting in it dropping to the floor with its true appearance revealed.

With its hair parted, it was revealed to have only skin and bone as if it were a dried up skeleton. Its half open mouth had a pair of inch long fangs emerging from it, making for a frightful appearance.

“This is...” Han Li glanced at the green fur on the body and took another look at its face. It faintly felt familiar as if he had seen it before in a jade slip.

After lowering his head in contemplation, its name suddenly appeared in his head. He couldn't help but raise his head and frightfully shout, “Cadaver Demon!” He suddenly recalled the fearsome legends of this vicious spirit from times of antiquity.

“Cadaver Demons” were a type of Jiangshi. However, it was greatly different from cultivator refined corpses and ordinary Jiangshi that naturally rose from deep within the earth. It only appeared under extremely rare and specific circumstances.

Although no one knew of the method by which this fearsome spirit took form, there were two main conditions that a Cadaver Corpse required to take form.

First, there must be a corpse of a Nascent Soul cultivator at the very least. Corpses of mortals and inferior cultivators weren't sufficient for a cadaver demon to form. Secondly, the corpse must have heavenly spirit roots that are either wood or earth attribute. Otherwise, it wouldn't be able to draw support from nature to rise once more.

In addition to this, the cultivator must've died harboring immense grievances. With the soul unwilling to return to the path of reincarnation, it is retained by the corpse. As time passed by with some other unknown conditions fulfilled, the soul and corpse would fuse together to form the monster known as a Cadaver Demon.

The monster could be said to be half human and half Jiangshi as well as half Jiangshi and half ghost.

Not only did it lack the fatal weakness of sunlight that ghost demons and Jiangshi possessed, but it also possessed most of its memories and techniques from when it was alive. And because it died harboring grievances, this fearsome spirit was undoubtedly bloodthirsty. They were particularly fond of hunting down cultivators and slowly torturing their souls with corpsefire for their amusement as they feasted on them.

It had been ages since the last Cadaver Demon had appeared in the cultivation world.

Chapter 613: Transformation

Recalling the stories about the Cadaver Demon's incredibly durable body, Han Li felt slight dejection. According to the rumors, he could only use true fire to slowly burn the corpse or extract the soul and seal it.

The Cadaver Demon clearly wasn't dead. It was merely restrained for the time being by the unknown golden talisman. He reckoned it would take quite a while before the Cadaver Demon would be able to recover its strength.

With that thought, Han Li's gaze fell onto the jade box at the corpse demon's side. Since it had suppressed the Cadaver Demon and still hadn't burned to ash, it must be a seal of sorts.

From how closely related the jade box was to the Cadaver Demon and the golden talisman that sealed it, it stands to reason that the box must've contained the Cadaver Demon's soul.

But in that case, why was the the Cadaver Demon able to control its body? It had also managed to nearly deceive Han Li into opening the jade box with its great intelligence. Could it be that the soul extraction was incomplete and that a remnant of the soul remained inside her body?

Also, why did the Cadaver Demon have a jade spirit well in its possession? Did it acquire it after it was trapped?

As Han Li was puzzling over this, he frowned and sank into deep thought.

After a short moment, Han Li bluntly tossed the useless question away and began to look around for a way to leave.

He would need to be at least at the Nascent Soul stage to be able to burn away the Cadaver Demon with true fire. Additionally, it would take several months at the very least. Even if Han Li had the cultivation to do so, he wouldn't waste the time or effort on such a

fruitless task.

He'd rather just get as far away from here as possible and have the Cadaver Demon continue to remain in isolation.

As for any unwitting cultivators in the future that wandered in here? That wasn't any of his business.

As for whenever the Cadaver Demon escaped from here, the great sects nearby could deal with it instead.

But in the end, Han Li's gaze fell onto the jade box once more.

After glancing at the jade box with the golden talisman several times, he hesitated for a moment before taking it into his hand. Afterwards, he placed it into his storage pouch with an unchanged expression.

The golden talisman on the jade box had released truly peculiar talisman characters. He planned on giving it a proper examination later on.

As for whether or not he would open the box, that decision would be left for once he finished condensing a Nascent Soul. At that point, he would be completely safe from any harmful spirit it may contain. With the Divine Devilbane Lightning, the Weeping Soul Beast, and a Nascent Soul cultivation, he would have nothing to fear.

Han Li waved the jade scepter in his hand and the light barrier around him suddenly disappeared, revealing the yellow wolf. He intended on having it use the earth movement technique to open a path through the stone room. The Lapis Stone was still stone after all, regardless of how rare and hardy it may be. As such, it should still be affected by the earth movement technique.

With that in mind, Han Li was about to have the wolf press onward when his expression suddenly stirred. He suddenly turned around and looked at the motionless Cadaver Demon.

After tilting his head in thought, he sighed and stepped towards

it. He raised the leg of the Cadaver Demon to reveal a pit underneath it. Inside the pit was the Snowcloud Fox that was now staring up at Han Li with pitiful eyes.

Han Li faintly smiled and muttered, “You’re rather intelligent to take refuge here.”

With that said, Han Li waved his arm and an azure light reached towards the small fox.

The white fox knew that things were far from good and hastily jumped in an attempt to flee. However, Han Li’s azure light was remarkably fast and caught it in midair. The azure light quickly wrapped around the fox, before quickly bringing it into Han Li’s grasp.

Han Li grabbed the white fox by its nape and turned around to leave the stone room.

As he walked, he unconsciously muttered, “You are quite persistent. Not only did you manage to preserve your life through that, you even managed to survive until now in the company of the Cadaver Demon. Truly inconceivable!”

“Huh? That’s... inconceivable...” Just as Han Li said that, his steps came to a sudden stop as a thought appeared in his mind.

With a greatly changed expression, he suddenly waved his arm and ruthlessly flung the white fox towards the stone wall.

In that instant, a trace of resentment appeared within the demon fox’s eyes. Those short and small limbs sharply increased in length, and it swiped its snow-white claws at his chest.

A huge clang shook the room.

In the midst of Han Li’s furious alarm, the white silhouette blurred as it was flung towards the wall. Preventing itself from being smashed, the small fox deftly rolled several times in the air and distorted its body to fall down at a corner of the room.

An ice-cold gaze appeared in its eyes, and it stood unscathed as it gazed at Han Li. Its green eyes faintly revealed a trace of disappointment.

Shaken with fear, Han Li glanced at the large hole left behind on his clothes, revealing a sparkle of green light. It was the inner armor that he had looted off of Wen Tianren.

After the Royal Scale Plate had been destroyed, Han Li had decided to replace it with this inner armor instead. Despite not knowing its name, Han Li could tell it wasn't inferior to the Royal Scale Plate in the slightest.

Although the sly and fierce attack had caught Han Li off guard, it was naturally incapable of piercing through an armor that even common magic treasures couldn't harm.

With his calm regained, Han Li stared at the white fox and gloomily asked, "Who are you? That morphed attack was something a low grade demon beast isn't capable of." At the same moment, he waved the jade scepter and tried to emit a light barrier around him.

However, he was shocked to discover the jade scepter was completely unresponsive. Han Li bewilderedly glanced at the yellow wolf to discover that it was standing in place without any changes.

Facing a powerful enemy, Han Li couldn't further investigate this and ordered the flying swords above him to form a curtain in front of him.

With the droning flying swords protecting him, Han Li finally felt somewhat more at ease.

In the following moment, Han Li was shocked to hear human words come from the Snowcloud Fox's mouth.

"Who am I? I'm the one who you just attacked. Don't tell me you've forgotten about me already?" The familiar woman's voice

revealed a trace of mockery as the fox suddenly stood up on its hind legs.

In that moment, the demon beast began to transform before Han Li's eyes.

Within a few breath's time, the white fox grew several times its size and shed the entirety of its fur in an instant. It transformed into a gorgeous young woman with a fox's tail. Han Li pursed his lips and could no longer keep calm. His entire face was filled with astonishment.

This woman appeared exactly the same as the black-clothed woman except for the fact that she was nude. With her ample chest bared, she glanced at Han Li and flirtatiously said, "Huh? My demon fox incarnation is not bad at all!" However, the depths of her bright eyes didn't contain the slightest warmth.

After Han Li took a deep breath, he recovered his calm and coldly said, "That was you?" He unconsciously glanced at the stone platform and saw that the corpse demon was completely still.

With his heart relieved, he turned his sights to the newly formed woman.

It would be reasonable to say that any demon beast that could assume human form was grade eight at the very least. However, when he examined the Cadaver Demon's white fox incarnation, he saw that it only had the cultivation of a seventh grade demon beast. Han Li felt surprise but not fear.

However, he didn't dare to completely trust the judgement of his spiritual sense. With a solemn expression on his face, he recalled what he had read about high grade demon foxes.

Nearly all demon foxes of this level were able to fully utilize illusion techniques. Many were even capable of toying around with similar grade cultivators without their knowledge. Their gift for concealment was among the best of all demon beasts.

Previously, Han Li had felt somewhat doubtful of those words. He had managed to examine the woman with his immense spiritual sense with ease.

However, since the Cadaver Demon had the ability to transform and retain this cultivation, why wasn't it able to take off the golden talisman of the jade box? Could it be that the demon still feared the golden talisman. Even in that case, with her cultivation, she would be able to kidnap a low grade cultivator and force them to tear it off.

As Han Li began to expressionlessly ponder, he faintly felt that the demon fox wasn't so simple as just the Cadaver Demon's incarnation. There was certain to be something hidden deeper.

With that thought, he regained his calm and glanced at the naked young woman before him with a trace of harsh killing intent.

Chapter 614: The Wolf's Appearance

“Regardless of whether or not you’re the Cadaver Demon’s incarnation, only one of us will be leaving alive.” With this staunch declaration, Han Li pointed to his flying swords without hesitation and had the azure sword curtain surge with light. It then transformed into a mist as it engulfed the demon fox’s corner of the room in an enormous display of strength.

When the young woman saw Han Li’s attack, she smirked and licked her luscious pink lips. With a bewitching, bone-shaking laughter, she faded away in a flash of white light.

The azure mist ended up striking nothing but the Lapis Stone wall in a series of small rings.

Han Li frowned and quickly swept his spiritual sense across the room but found no trace of the demon fox. Her concealment technique was far beyond his own.

However, Han Li still remained calm. He coldly sorted and slapped the storage pouch, taking a small silver bell into his hand.

“Go!” Han Li shouted. The small bell began to glow and instantly flew to a meter above his head.

Without the slightest delay, Han Li formed an incantation gesture with his hand and opened his mouth, releasing a breathful of azure Qi towards the small bell.

The ancient treasure flowed with light before releasing a loud clang.

Since this room was sealed, the silver bell’s sound attacks should be slightly more effective. As of that moment, the entire Lapis Stone room began to reverberate and the air within twenty meters of Han Li began to distort. Soon after, the naked woman revealed herself in a flash of white as she staggered from the attack.

Han Li rejoiced and was inwardly puzzled. The demon fox

appeared weaker than common grade seven demon beasts. Was this because the Cadaver Demon had sustained damage before the incarnation took form?

With that in mind, Han Li flicked his hand without any further hesitation, shooting five streaks of azure sword Qi towards her. The meter long streaks of light penetrated through her body in an instant.

Then with a miserable scream, the woman fell to the ground as a puddle of blood began to form around her.

Han Li felt rather stunned at how easy it had been. While he was at a loss, the jade scepter in his hand suddenly grew hot and pulsed with red light as it surrounded his body in a dark-red light barrier.

Immediately after, several silver strands attacked him from a seemingly empty area. The light barrier's sudden appearance had managed to just block them just in time.

“What!? No!”

A man and a woman's voice shouted at the same time.

After recovering from his fright, Han Li opened his mouth and spat out an azure streak in the direction from where the silver strings were launched.

A series of alluring, soul-shaking laughs suddenly sounded out as a flash of white light appeared at another place in the room. The naked woman appeared with her chest loosely held in her arms.

Han Li's expression became extremely unsightly, and his gaze turned towards where the young woman had previously fallen. However, there was no longer anything there!

Han Li pursed his dry lips and sullenly said, “Illusion technique!”

The young woman widely smiled and didn't respond. Instead, her gaze dropped down towards the yellow wolf at his side, and her face revealed a trace of astonishment.

When Han Li saw the young woman reveal this expression, his heart stirred and he glanced at the wolf as well. Afterwards, his attention turned to the jade scepter in his hand and his expression began to waver.

The light barrier blocking the foxes cunning strike wasn't something that he had ordered. Could it be that the artifact spirit had taken the initiative to rescue him? At that moment, the mystery behind the huge silver wolf, the combined form of the red and yellow wolves, was suddenly brought to Han Li's mind as his heart grew heavy.

The young woman twisted her slender waist and thought to say something when the jade scepter in Han Li's hand pulsed before a red wolf emerged before Han Li in a flash of red light. As soon as it appeared, both the red and yellow wolves merged together in a dazzling display.

Han Li was deeply shocked by the scene and tightened his grip on the jade scepter, not daring to make any rash movements.

As he expected, a ring of silver light erupted from the converging yellow and red light, revealing a three-meter-tall silver wolf from within it. The wolf floated in the air as it stared at the demon fox with interest.

Although the naked woman didn't know what the silver wolf was, for some reason she had felt her heart drop as soon as it had appeared, arousing a faint sense of foreboding. Under the stare of the huge wolf, her charming expression unconsciously froze.

It was then that she realized things were far from good for her. With raised brows and a serious expression, she spat out a pink, fragrant mist, concealing her entire body in an instant.

The pink mist quickly spread throughout the air and enveloped most of the room in the blink of an eye. Although Han Li didn't know what purpose this pink mist had, he didn't dare to breath it in. His expression immediately grew stern as he grabbed the spirit

beast pouch at his waist.

Regardless of how formidable the demon fox's technique may be, he didn't believe that it would be able to endure the attack of the tens of thousands of Gold Devouring Beetles.

But just as Han Li was about to open the spirit beast pouch, the silver wolf had taken action, much to his astonishment.

The silver wolf suddenly opened his mouth and released countless fist-sized spheres of silver light into the mist in a violent torrent. Then with a howl, the wolf charged forward in a streak of silver light.

Han Li was at such a loss that he stopped summoning his Gold Devouring Beetles.

In the next moment, all of the silver spheres that had entered the mist began to burst.

Silver light intertwined with the pink mist, causing the demon fox to shout in furious alarm.

With that, the silver wolf then entered the mist.

"What are you doing... Impossible... You... No..." As if having seen something unbelievable, the demon fox began to scream out in fright. An instant later, the miserable wails faded away as quickly as they had appeared.

When Han Li heard this, his expression changed as he stared into the mist with narrowed eyes.

Fortunately, the mist began to dissipate from a lack of spiritual power and revealed the previous hidden scene.

Han Li's face distorted at the sight of the demon fox's naked form trembling on the ground. Pink and silver light enveloped different halves of the body with the lights intertwined at the body's center, continuously releasing sparks as if they were in opposition.

"Possession?!" Han Li shouted in his bewilderment. The silver

light suddenly gained the advantage and slowly encroached on the pink light's territory.

“NO!” The young woman suddenly wrapped her head in her arms and screamed in pain. Soon after, her body began to tremble as it body began to change in a series of white flashes. A few seconds later, the woman's form turned back into that of an exquisite white fox.

By that point, the last remnant of pink light had been consumed by the silver glow and the body's astonishing cultivation disappeared without a trace. It now only appeared to be the original low grade demon beast.

The white fox sat motionlessly on the ground as if it were completely exhausted, but the silver light enveloping its body only became more radiant.

Han Li tightly held onto the jade scepter in his hand and uncertainty appeared on his face. It was clear that the silver wolf had succeeded in its possession of the body, but he didn't know if he could continue to restrict or order the silver wolf while it was in the fox's body.

A long while later, Han Li released a long sigh. Regardless of how it could be seen, the white fox couldn't pose the slightest resistance with its current cultivation. As such, there was no need to prematurely strike it down. Moreover, regardless of the silver wolf's actions it seemed to bear him no malice.

Of course, Han Li had always wanted to know more about the history behind the silver wolf, but before he could even ask, the artifact spirit had taken action of its own accord. It was clear that the silver wolf had quite a story behind it as he had long since guessed.

As a result, Han Li sunk into deep thought as his expression began to fluctuate. The white fox's silver radiance eventually dimmed and it began to stand up on its four limbs.

As if unsuited to the fox's body, it knelt down after only taking a few steps.

Han Li couldn't help but chuckle at the sight.

Having heard this, the white fox turned its head to Han Li with a trace of irritation clear in its eyes.

He then heard a woman's voice, "What's so funny? I've just possessed this body. It is only natural that I've yet to adapt to it."

Just as Han Li heard this, his smile froze as he rubbed his nose and muttered, "So you're... also a woman?"

Chapter 615: Silvermoon Wolf

The female voice coldly said, “Humph! Whose a woman? Do you mean me?”

When Han Li heard this, he wryly smiled in response and withdrew his magic swords that were revolving at his side. He then calmly said, “I don’t care if you’re a man or a woman. I just want to hear of your origins.”

The white fox crouched and calmly glanced at Han Li, “My origins? Am I not the artifact spirit of the ancient treasure in your hand?”

Han Li frowned and gloomily replied, “Of course I know you’re an artifact spirit. However, I’ve never heard of an artifact spirit being capable of possession.”

The white fox curled its mouth and casually said, “This merely illustrates your ignorance. Have I not already demonstrated that it is possible?”

When Han Li heard this, he grew silent for a moment. After a short moment, he lifted the jade scepter in his hand and began to carefully look it over.

A vigilant expression appeared in the white fox’s eyes and she coldly asked, “What do you plan on doing?”

Han Li sighed and calmly asked, “Nothing in particular. I am merely curious as to how useless this jade scepter is now that you’ve successfully possessed the demon fox. If I were to shatter this, would anything happen to you?”

The white fox’s expression massively changed and it fiercely glared at Han Li. But after only a short moment, it thought of something and its imposing attitude soon disappeared. The white fox insipidly said, “You don’t need to test me. It is true that if you shatter the jade scepter, I will disappear as well. After all, artifact

spirits are one with the treasures that contain them.”

Afterwards, white light flashed from the fox’s body and a huge pressure began to emit from it.

Han Li’s heart trembled, and his expression immediately became tense.

The white fox glanced at Han Li and said, “There is no need to be worried. I merely find it inconvenient to speak to you in beast form, so I am transforming into a human.”

When Han Li heard this, he felt somewhat surprised but a bit more at ease as well.

At that moment, the white fox glowed with a blinding silver light, causing Han Li to unconsciously take a few steps back.

The white glow faded away to reveal a young woman with an alluring beauty. Apart from her shining green eyes being replaced with a clear black, the woman’s appearance was exactly the same as before it had been possessed. It seemed a demon beast’s human form was permanent and it was incapable of being changed.

As Han Li pondered to himself, the young woman unconsciously covered her body. She then hesitantly asked, “Does Fellow Daoist have any clothes? I feel... unaccustomed to this.” After that was said, the woman revealed an expression of slight shyness.

Han Li was stunned for a moment, but he soon took out a few reserve clothes from his storage pouch and handed them over.

“Many thanks, Fellow Daoist!” The young woman took the clothes and began to drape them on her body, covering herself.

Han Li’s expression stirred. The woman’s every action exuded an undescrivable gracefulness. Even women from noble households would find it difficult to match her. It was incredulous that she was originally a silver wolf.

Having finished putting on her clothes, the woman turned to

Han Li and slowly said, “You may call me Silvermoon. As for my origins, it’s not that I don’t wish to tell you, but I cannot remember them myself. You should know that when a demon’s soul is refined into an artifact spirit, their consciousness will fade away and they become an obedient entity for their master to command. But for some unknown reason, I one day regained awareness and recalled a few memories of when I was alive. Although it is a rather small amount, I regained some ability for independent action. I faintly recalled that I was once a member of the Silver Wolves Clan. As such, I’ve named myself Silvermoon Wolf since I do not have any memory of my original name.” As she said this, the young woman elegantly took a few steps as if to slowly get accustomed to her new body.

A pensive expression appeared on Han Li’s face as he stroked his chin. “The Silvermoon Wolves Clan? I have no records of such demon beasts.”

Silvermoon frowned and said, “This merely came from a portion of my shattered memories. Perhaps I remembered incorrectly.”

Han Li pondered for a moment before solemnly asking, “Alright, you’ve lost the memories of your past, but what about the matter of an artifact spirit taking possession of another body? Don’t tell me that all artifact spirits can do this. If this were true, the cultivation world would’ve long ago been thrown into disarray.”

The young woman coldly smiled and countered, “Do you really believe that I can casually possess any flesh body as I wish?”

Han Li narrowed his eyes and stared at the woman, “What do you mean?”

Silvermoon pursed her lips and explained, “The technique that I just used can’t strictly be considered possession. It is merely an innate ability of us Silvermoon Wolves called Soul Devouring. By using our manifested souls, we may directly attack the soul of another. Of course, once we devour their souls, we may

temporarily take control of the new body. However, this cannot last for a long period of time, otherwise our souls will merge with the possessed body and we will no longer be able to return to our own. Additionally, this ability is a double-edged sword. Our spiritual sense isn't particularly stronger than those of other demon clans. If we were to come across an opponent with a stronger spiritual sense, our lives would be thrown away. As a result, none dared to rashly use it. However, to someone without a body like me, it doesn't particularly matter."

Having seen Han Li's astonishment, she guessed what Han Li was about to ask and hurriedly continued, "Please don't ask me about the specifics of Soul Devouring. It is only something I have an instinctual grasp of. But there is no need to worry, Soul Devouring possesses many restrictions and isn't something that I can casually use. It would've been impossible for me to use it as an artifact spirit if I weren't originally a Silvermoon Wolf. Had I not been fortunate enough to come across this Four Pupiled Fox, I wouldn't have used it. I would've merely chosen to remain inside the jade scepter instead. According to my memories, the Four Pupiled Foxes were innately vulnerable against Silvermoon Wolves. With its spirit already possessed by the Cadaver Demon and without having to deal with the original body's master, I was luckily able to succeed in possessing it."

Han Li closely looked into her eyes and found nothing strange. He couldn't help but doubtfully ask, "Four Pupiled Fox? Was it not a Snowcloud Fox?"

"Its namesake, the innate devil pupils, only appear after its cultivation has reached the greater success stage. Our Silvermoon Wolves Soul Devouring is a joke in comparison to their devil eyes with their fearsome deadliness. But while their appearance is extremely similar to a common Snowcloud Fox, when it fully used its technique I immediately recognized it." Silvermoon faintly smiled and unconsciously revealed a captivating beauty.

Han Li pursed his lips and raised his most pressing concern, “The demon fox’s cultivation reached that of a grade seven demon beast. That isn’t considered having reached greater success stage? And how come it is capable of taking human form when it had yet to breakthrough to metamorphosis stage? Moreover, how was the demon fox’s cultivation able to change so suddenly? Don’t tell me that you and the demon fox had been concealing this body’s true cultivation all along.”

“Haha! Fellow Daoist sure has many questions. However, I haven’t spoken to anybody else in countless years so I don’t mind. I truly don’t know why the demon fox was capable of transforming. I reckon that the Cadaver Demon saw that the situation was disadvantageous and decided to use a technique to forcefully graft a portion of its cultivation onto the demon fox. That was how its cultivation was able to reach such heights. The Four Pupiled Fox’s true cultivation is still that of a genuine low grade spirit beast. Also, the Cadaver Demon wasn’t able to stray too far away from its body once it grafted its cultivation onto the demon fox due to the room’s restrictions. As for why I am currently in human form, it is mostly because I am raising my cultivation to the border of a grade eight demon beast by using secret techniques. However, my cultivation will slowly decrease and I will turn back into a demon beast. It will be at least a month before I can use this technique again.”

After that, Han Li didn’t continue his questioning. Instead, he lowered his head in thought. A long while later, he indifferently said, “Although this hasn’t dispelled all of my doubts, I’ve reached a general understanding. However, there is something I wish to ask Fellow Daoist Silvermoon. What do you plan on doing with that body?”

Silvermoon revealed a mysterious smile and chuckled before asking, “Would Fellow Daoist kill me if I told you that I planned on cultivating with it?”

Chapter 616: Master of an Artifact Spirit

Han Li didn't directly respond to her question and responded with raised eyebrows, "From the techniques and abilities that you displayed today as well as during that time in Heavenvoid Hall, it seemed that you deliberately allowed me to acquire the jade scepter. Is that right?"

Silverwolf felt somewhat stunned by his question, and she smiled with luminous eyes, "As the jade scepter's tool spirit, I didn't have much of a chance to leave Heavenvoid Hall by myself. I needed a cultivator to bring me out. On that day, I didn't use my full abilities to resist capture. And with my cultivation greatly reduced after breaking free from the Heavenvoid Cauldron, my full resistance wouldn't have been able to stop a Nascent Soul cultivator. In the end, it would've been better for me to fall into the hands of a Core Formation cultivator instead."

After muttering to himself for a moment, Han Li asked with a deep voice, "That day, I wasn't the only Core Formation cultivator there. Why didn't you fall into the hands of the other two? Did you choose me?"

Silvermoon's expression stirred and asked, "You mean the youth surnamed Wu and the Ghost Dao cultivator that planned on killing you for the Heavenvoid Cauldron?"

"That's right!"

Silvermoon pursed her lips and sweetly smiled, "I simply found them undesirable! One was eerie and filled with ghost Qi and the other shriveled and hideous. Although you aren't a majestic figure, you could be considered somewhat pleasing to the eye. Do you find these reasons acceptable?" She seemed both earnest and joking as she said this.

Han Li found himself overwhelmed with a feeling of not knowing whether he should laugh or cry.

“Since Fellow Daoist is unwilling to speak of it, I won’t press you since I have a more important question to ask. Have you been able to observe my actions over the years from within my storage pouch?” Han Li’s question was spoken with an icy tone, causing the temperature in the room to instantly drop.

Her smile vanished and she seriously responded, “That’s right. Regardless of whether it is Brother Han’s techniques or magic treasures, I have been able to observe everything. I even know of the small, heaven-defying bottle of yours.”

Although he had faintly guessed as much, Han Li’s expression instantly grew gloomy upon hearing her. He icily glanced at the young woman in silence as if he were thinking of a countermeasure.

Silvermoon ignored Han Li’s icy expression and asked with a weak smile, “Could it be that Fellow Daoist Han plans on killing me? After all, if any of the cultivator clans were to know that such a heaven-defying treasure were to exist, Brother Han would surely meet a miserable end.”

When Han Li heard her, his eyes narrowed and his gaze became sharp as a blade’s edge.

With a hostile expression, Han Li chillingly said, “Since Fellow Daoist Silvermoon is fully aware of this and dares to brazenly mention it, are you not afraid that I will destroy your linked treasure? If you were to perish, there wouldn’t be any leaked secrets. Or do you believe that I wouldn’t be able to kill you?”

Silvermoon shook her head and serenely said, “With your current abilities and magic treasures along with my unfamiliarity with this body, it is unlikely that I could prove to be your opponent. And after seizing this body through Soul Devouring, my cultivation greatly decreased. If we were to fight, I’d only have a thirty percent chance of victory if I’m being generous. Besides, my housed treasure is in your hands. I could disappear as soon as you

willed it.”

Han Li coldly snorted, but the young woman continued her explanation without a care, “I am very much satisfied that Fellow Daoist Han has been able to tolerate me this far without killing me. While you can’t be considered a chivalrous hero, you are still clearly someone who understands debts of gratitude. If I hadn’t taken action to block the demon fox’s attack, Brother Han probably wouldn’t have given me the opportunity to speak so much rubbish.”

Han Li didn’t deny her, instead calmly admitting, “Even if I give you the opportunity, if you aren’t able to convince me, I will still take action. I cannot allow any knowledge of the bottle to escape.”

Silvermoon explained with an appreciative expression, “That’s fine. Brother Han’s words are still in line with my predictions. If Fellow Daoist Han were not ruthless and decisive, he wouldn’t have made it this far on the path of cultivation, and I definitely wouldn’t have saved you. After all, I don’t wish to be immediately discarded after recognizing a master.”

Han Li was stunned for a moment before he sneered and said, “Recognizing a master? What is that supposed to mean? Do you really believe that I’d release you over a few words?”

The woman’s eyes brightly stirred as she further explained, “Of course it isn’t such a simple matter. According to my knowledge, your set of Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords has no artifact spirit. I am capable of shifting my main soul from the jade scepter over to your Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords for the time being. With this, your flying swords would become far stronger, and you could end my life with a single thought. This should be enough for you to release me. After all, as your artifact spirit, you’ll be able to sense if I have even the slightest malice towards you. Also, since my flesh body cannot be separated too far away from my main soul, there will be no fear of me abandoning you.”

Han Li frowned and deliberated for a long while before nonchalantly asking, “Can artifact spirits change their main bodies? If that is possible, then why are you willing to become my artifact spirit? Don’t tell me that this is just because you’re grateful that I’ve taken you out of Heavenvoid Hall.”

The young woman sighed and slowly said, “Other artifact spirits possess no awareness and are naturally incapable of changing their housed treasure. However, I am different. So long as we are both willing, I am completely capable of doing this. Naturally, if I am to change my housed treasure, I will certainly feel immense pain but that cannot be helped. As for my intentions, I naturally don’t wish to be an artifact spirit for eternity. Don’t think my views to be contradictory. I am only willing to become your artifact spirit now so that I may acquire true freedom in the future.”

Han Li’s heart stirred and his expression grew lax, “Could you speak of that in more detail?”

“I am not too sure of the specifics, but my scattered memories tell me that if I cultivate a secret technique, and my housed treasure’s master reaches the legendary Deity Transformation stage, then I will acquire my freedom in the instant they ascend to the next realm. But before that happens, I will still be under your control. If you were to die for any reason before then, I will have to find another cultivator. From the way I see it, with your precious small bottle, you are the most likely cultivator to fulfill my wishes. That is why I was willing to take the initiative to offer to become your artifact spirit.”

Han Li’s expression wavered upon hearing this. After letting out a long sigh, he said, “Regardless of whether or not you’re telling the truth, I truly have no method of controlling you other than this. And since you’ve taken the initiative to become my artifact spirit, I cannot reject you. However, I will have to place a temporary restriction on your body for the time being. After all, suddenly shifting an artifact spirit isn’t something that can be

done all at once. I must first prepare myself. Oh right, how far away can you be from your housed treasure while in that body?”

Silvermoon appeared happy that Han Li had agreed to her request. She obediently replied, “Currently, I must be within fifty kilometers of you. But soon, this demon fox’s cultivation will increase and so should the range.”

Han Li closely pursued this matter with a cautious expression, “What will happen if you exceed this range?”

“If the range is exceeded, my soul will be beckoned by the housed treasure and I will be called back. However, Fellow Daoist need not worry about inconveniencing me. I know a secret technique that allows my body to be safely sealed within a spirit beast pouch. So long as you cultivate the technique and give the order, I can leave and enter the spirit beast pouch at will. As for when you confront an enemy, I can appear as your artifact spirit or even as the fox in accordance to the situation.”

Han Li appeared satisfied by Silvermoon’s answer and nodded his head, “Good, since that’s the case, I’ll first...”

Silvermoon’s expression changed as she suddenly interrupted him, “Not good, my spiritual power is exhausted. I cannot continue to maintain this body.”

In a pulse of silver light, her body shrank before Han Li’s eyes, turning back into a small white fox. It was currently wrapped around Han Li’s rather large clothes.

When Han Li saw this, he couldn’t help but bitterly laugh. He then formed an incantation gesture without any hesitation and shot several streaks of azure light into the white fox’s body, placing it underneath his restrictions.

Han Li then lifted the white fox by its nape and said, “Once we head out, I will hand you over to the Drifting Cloud disciples for the time being. Then after we part, slip away on your own. It

should be extremely easy for you to slip away from a couple of Qi Condensation cultivators. I'll be waiting for you along the way."

Chapter 617: Return

“Alright, I’ll do as you said. But how will Brother Han handle this Cadaver Demon?” The white fox spoke to Han Li through a voice transmission.

Han Li took a look at the green haired Cadaver Demon and casually said, “First, I’ll see whether or not the Gold Devouring Beetles can destroy it. If that isn’t possible, then there is nothing that can be done. We’ll just leave it alone. Besides, regardless of the outcome I’ll be taking the jade box that has its main soul. It won’t be able to cause any major problems later on.”

He then slapped his waist and launched the Spirit Beast Pouch into the air, releasing countless black-tainted Gold Devouring Beetles to surround the Cadaver Demon.

Sounds of the beetle’s gnawing spread throughout the room, but soon, Han Li saw a portion of the Gold Devouring Beetles suddenly fall onto their backs and die. Their tri-colored shell turned dark-green in an instant.

“What fearsome poison!” Han Li muttered with a faint scowl. After a moment of hesitation, he had the flying beetles return to his spirit beast pouch.

The white fox pondered for a long moment and said, “The Cadaver Demon’s rotting poison might not be among the ten deadliest poisons in the land, but it isn’t something that your incomplete Gold Devouring Beetles are capable of enduring.”

Han Li snorted and frowned as he coldly glanced at the Cadaver Demon.

The monster’s body was extremely durable, far beyond that of the Venomous Flood Dragon. He reckoned that if he were to destroy the Cadaver Demon, it would cause a majority of his black-tainted Gold Devouring Beetles to perish. There was no way Han Li would suffer such a loss over a fruitless matter.

“Let’s go.” Han Li spoke without the slightest hesitation.

The white fox nodded her head and said, “That does seem to be the only choice. Perhaps there will be a later use for the Cadaver Demon!”

With that said, a strange light glowed from the white fox and a yellow wolf head emerged from its body. As soon as the yellow wolf appeared, it opened its mouth wide and enveloped them both in yellow light. Afterwards, Han Li and the white fox disappeared from the room.

Senior Martial Brother Wang and the other three Qi Condensation cultivators were anxiously standing outside of the cliff. With none of them capable of using earth movement techniques, they could only wait for Han Li to return.

Kui Huan grew impatient and asked, “Senior Martial Brother, do you think Junior Martial Brother Han succeeded?”

When the other two heard him they attentively looked at Senior Martial Brother Wang. He wryly smiled and said, “It’s hard to say. With Junior Martial Brother Han’s tenth layer cultivation, it shouldn’t have been easy for him to chase after the demon fox. However, Junior Martial Brother Han does possess an impressive magic tool. Perhaps he’ll be able to give us a pleasant surprise, but either result shouldn’t come as a shock.”

When the other three heard this, they couldn’t help but look at each other in dismay.

The short, stout youth sighed and shook his injured hand. When he thought to say something further, a yellow light suddenly flashed from the cliff to reveal Han Li with a small fox in his grasp.

“Junior Martial Brother Han!”

“You truly managed to capture the fox!”

All four of the cultivators began to speak with expressions of excitement.

Han Li chuckled and said, “It wasn’t much. The fox was quite cunning and circled several times within the mountain. Had it not exhausted its spiritual power, I fear I wouldn’t have been able to capture it so quickly.” He then tossed the white fox towards Kui Huan.

Kui Huan was stunned for a moment before excitedly catching it.

The short, stout youth hurriedly warned, “Junior Martial Brother Kui, be careful! Don’t let it run away!”

Kui Huan lifted the white fox and replied, “Don’t worry! I’ll be very careful.” Afterwards, he slapped his storage pouch and took out a dark-green bag before quickly slipping the small fox inside.

Kui Huan quickly tied the pouch closed and proudly said, “Hehe! How will you escape from this pouch, little fox?”

Han Li took a look at the small pouch, but after seeing that it was only a low grade spirit tool, he paid it no further heed.

Senior Martial Brother Wang didn’t pay any further attention to the small fox in the pouch. He instead faced Han Li and cordially said, “We were only able to capture the demon fox in great thanks to Junior Martial Brother Han. Since we aren’t an unscrupulous sort, we’ll give Junior Brother Han a third of whatever the fox will fetch us. As for the rest, we’ll split it evenly among us four. How does that sound?”

Han Li smiled in response. From Senior Martial Brother Wang’s skilled display, it seemed he truly wished to form a relationship with Han Li. As a result, Han Li nodded his head and agreed without any reservations, “Since Brother Wang has made up his mind, I have no complaints.”

Although the other three felt somewhat reluctant to receive fewer spirit stones, they all knew that if it weren’t for Han Li’s assistance they would’ve ended up wasting their efforts. As such, no one raised any objections.

In the following moments, Han Li shared a few pleasantries with the others before excusing himself on the pretenses of having a pressing matter at hand.

With Han Li heading back to the sect the other four decided to strike while the iron was hot and head straight to the market city at the center of the Dreamcloud Mountains. Since that was where the disciples of the three sects mingled the most, they reckoned they would fetch the highest price for the Snowcloud Fox there.

The four then departed from the marsh in high spirits.

Han Li didn't travel far before casually finding a small mountain nearby. He dropped down and sat cross legged on a flat rock before closing his eyes. He had the jade scepter on hand, allowing the white fox to find him when the time came.

About an hour later, Han Li's expression stirred and he opened his eyes. At nearly the same time, a yellow light emerged from the earth revealing the white fox.

Han Li looked at the white fox and indifferently said, "Well aren't you fast?"

The white fox raised its head and chuckled, "It isn't that I'm fast. It's just that they underestimated me by using a low grade spirit tool to contain me. I fear they still haven't discovered that I've disappeared."

Han Li expressionlessly said, "But now those Drifting Cloud Sect disciples will have made a wasted effort. When the time comes, I should give them a bit of compensation!"

The white fox shook its head and said, "If that's the case, they will have profited from this disaster."

"Alright, let's cut the rubbish. Shrink yourself and hide in my sleeve for the time being. We're going to return." Han Li then shook his sleeve.

When the white fox heard him, she wordlessly shrunk herself in

a glimmer of silver light and flew into Han Li's sleeve as a white blur.

Because of the restrictions that Han Li had placed on the white fox's body, he had no fear of any sinister designs the white fox may hold, allowing him to confidently fly back.

Instead of returning to his cave residence, he first dropped down into the market city at the main mountain of the Drifting Cloud Sect. They should have the materials he needed to shift the housing of the artifact spirit.

He needed to hurry up and make preparations for his return. Each passing day that Silvermoon remained as a loose artifact spirit was a day that he felt uneasy.

Han Li was able to purchase the ingredients without problem. He easily found a store dealing with materials and purchased them all in one go. Although these materials were uncommon, they weren't particularly rare or precious. As a result, no one has asked him what he was using them for.

With both the materials and white fox on hand, Han Li flew back to the medicine garden with satisfaction. But just as he arrived at the medicine garden, there were two people standing outside the restrictions.

One of them was Kui Huan who was sighing with an appearance of nervousness. The other person was a sullen-faced Senior Martial Brother Wang.

When Han Li saw them, he inwardly sighed. He obviously knew why they were here. However, Han Li landed near them with an expression of ignorance.

When they saw that Han Li had returned, they glanced at each other and wore embarrassed expressions.

Han Li stepped forward and calmly asked, "Fellow Daoists, why have you returned so quickly? Have you already sold the

Snowcloud Fox?”

After a moment of hesitation, Senior Martial Brother Wang wryly smiled and said, “We... I’m afraid we’ve let Brother Han down.”

Han Li stroked his chin and asked, “Oh, what happened? Was there an incident with the Snowcloud Fox?”

Kui Huan opened his eyes wide and bewilderedly asked, “Junior Martial Brother Han, how did you know?!”

Chapter 618: Sword Trial Assembly

Han Li faintly smiled when he heard Kui Huan and calmly said, “The only thing that we have together is a business interest in the demon fox. What else would bring you here?”

When Kui Huan heard this, he opened his mouth but was left at a loss for words. At his side, Senior Martial Brother Wang sighed and said, “Junior Martial Brother Han is clearly an intelligent person. It is true that something has gone wrong with the Snowcloud Fox. We wished to sell the demon fox as soon as possible and headed straight to a market city when we departed. But not long after we left, I grew somewhat ill at ease and had Junior Martial Brother Kui open the bag to let me examine the fox. As a result...”

With that said, Senior Martial Brother Wang paused, revealing a strange expression.

Vexed, Kui Huan hurriedly finished for him, “As a result, we discovered that the demon fox had somehow managed to escape without a trace. It was truly inconceivable.”

“It disappeared without a trace?” Han Li frowned as if he was wondering about the truth behind those words.

When Senior Martial Brother Wang saw Han Li’s expression, he inwardly cursed without end.

Although Han Li’s cultivation wasn’t high, he was skilled in talisman refinement and possessed a powerful magic tool. With that in mind, Senior Martial Brother Wang had planned on properly forming a relationship with him. However, he didn’t anticipate such an embarrassing affair to occur before he could formally establish a friendship.

It would be fine if he were wealthy. He’d be able to easily solve this by just using his own spirit stones and leave a good impression with Han Li. But as it so happened, he along with his fellow group

members were lacking spirit stones making it extremely difficult to win Han Li over.

With that thought, Senior Martial Brother Wang forcefully mustered himself out of his dejection saying, “I know that this matter is hard to believe, but it really did happen. Regardless of how it’s said, Junior Martial Brother did personally hand over the demon fox to us, but now I must take responsibility for its disappearance. I’ve already sent my Junior Martial Brothers to sell off the Huangjing to repay the spirit stones we borrowed from you, and we’ll have that for you soon. As for Junior Martial Brother’s rightful share of spirit stones, we will make up for it as soon as we can.”

Just as soon as Kui Huan heard this, his expression changed and he nervously said, “Senior Martial Brother, that is no small sum of spirit stones. Even if we were to pool together all we have, it would take at least three years to gather together that many spirit stones. It will slow down our cultivation if we cannot purchase any medicine pills during that time.”

Senior Martial Brother Wang shook his head and was about to say something when Han Li interrupted him with a smile, “There is no need for Senior Martial Brother to be like this! I believe you. The Snowcloud Fox was rather proficient in movement techniques so it’s no surprise that it was able to escape from the leather bag magic tool. I had originally thought to give a word of warning to Brother Kui, but at the time I found it to be somewhat inappropriate and stayed quiet. As for my share of the spirit stones, let’s just drop it. It’ll be fine if you just return the spirit stones that you borrowed. With that I won’t consider myself to have suffered a loss.”

When Kui Huan heard that he didn't have to give any spirit stones, he was greatly delighted and slapped his hands together saying, “I knew that Junior Martial Brother Han was a magnanimous person. Although it was our fault, we truly don’t

possess the spirit stones to compensate you. And with Junior Martial Brother's wealth, he shouldn't mind such a small amount too greatly. I, Kui Huan, will always look upon you as a friend."

When Senior Martial Brother Wang heard Han Li, he revealed some hesitation. A moment later, he helplessly smiled and said, "On behalf of my Junior Martial Brothers, I accept Junior Martial Brother Han's generosity despite our shameful display. If you ever require any assistance in the future, please don't hesitate to find us. So long as it is possible, I will not refuse you."

Senior Martial Brother Wang felt that while Han Li's words were polite, he feared that Han Li harbored different thoughts entirely. As a result, he strived his hardest to choose his words carefully to leave behind the best impression possible. Having said that, he then particularly paid attention to Han Li's expression.

However, Senior Martial Brother Wang inwardly frowned since he wasn't able to make out any of Han Li's emotions.

The three had a chat outside the garden, but soon the other two Qi Condensation cultivators in their party arrived with the spirit stones they had acquired from reselling the Huangjing.

Han Li received the pouch of spirit stones and casually swept his spiritual sense through it before calmly putting it away.

After seeing Han Li receive the spirit stones, Senior Martial Brother Wang suddenly recalled something and asked, "Ah, that's right. Junior Martial Brother's magic tool is rather impressive. Will you be taking part in the Sword Trial Assembly later this year?"

Han Li couldn't help but reply with an odd expression, "The Sword Trial Assembly?"

"What? Does Junior Martial Brother Han not know of it?"

Not only was Senior Martial Brother Wang surprised, but the other three seemed to find this hard to believe as well.

Han Li inwardly muttered to himself and calmly replied, “Is it strange that I don’t know of it?”

Kui Huan blinked and suddenly recalled something, “Of course it is. Oh, that’s right. This is Junior Martial Brother’s first year in the sect and he was staying in the medicine garden all this time. It makes sense that you don’t know of the Sword Trial Assembly.”

When the others heard this, they glanced at one another and nodded their heads, accepting this as the truth.

Senior Martial Brother Wang wore a strange expression and said, “We were greatly shocked when we heard that Junior Martial Brother Han didn’t know about the Sword Trial Assembly. After all, it is starting soon and all disciples within the sect are talking about, even the external affair disciples. Those that wish to prove their mettle are eagerly waiting in anticipation.”

The short, stout youth glanced at Senior Martial Brother Wang with admiration and said, “With that said, the only one in our group to participate in the contest of might will be Senior Martial Brother Wang. However, it is a pity that while Senior Martial Brother may prevail against external affair disciples, he will eventually be defeated when facing inner sect disciples. But even with this, Senior Martial Brother should still receive a mid grade magic tool as a reward.”

When Han Li heard this, he wore a curious expression and said, “Oh, so it is a contest of superiority within the sect. It seems that it is quite unordinary. Could Senior Martial Brother explain a few of the finer details?”

Senior Martial Brother Wang glanced at Han Li and slowly said, “Of course. The Sword Trial Assembly is actually for showing off newly joined disciples. Regardless of one’s identity, so long as they are a newly accepted disciple that isn’t over the age of thirty, one can participate. As for you, Junior Martial Brother Han, you still appear to be in your mid twenties and you’ve just entered the sect.

You happen to meet the requirements.”

Han Li rubbed his chin and slowly said, “Is that so? It seems that there aren’t many disciples that can partake in the contest.”

“Junior Martial Brother’s world hold somewhat true, but the Sword Trial Assembly actually has much to do with a sacred tree that the three sects are overseeing.”

“A sacred tree?” When Han Li heard this, he was stunned and realized that they were talking about Dreamcloud Mountain’s spirit well tree. His initially careless expression was quickly replaced with a solemn one.

Han Li seriously asked, “What does the Sword Trial Assembly have to do with the sacred tree?”

“The Sword Trial Assembly takes place several days before sacred tree starts to shed Wine Nectar. The three sects use this competition to decide who receives half of the shedded Wine Nectar, leaving the remaining half to be split between the two other sects. As a result, while this assembly can only be participated by young, new disciples, it is viewed with great importance among the three sects. If one achieves great merits in the assembly, one will attract the attention of the sect elders and acquire countless benefits.”

Senior Martial Brother Wang sighed and paused for a moment before solemnly continuing, “Of course, beside those benefits, one is also heavily rewarded at the end for how many other disciples they are able to suppress. Not only were many disciples rewarded with top grade magic tools in the past, there were also a few disciples that were rewarded with a Spirit Tempering Pill. Although this medicine pill isn’t very useful for low grade disciples, there are many Core Formation experts that are more than willing to exchange them for at least four top grade magic tools. However, this assembly has almost always been dominated by the Ancient Sword Sect, leaving our sect and the Hundred

Possibilities Sect to take second and third place. However, this comes as no surprise. With their incisive magic tools and techniques, the disciples of the Ancient Sword Sect make for incredibly difficult opponents for cultivators of the same grade.”

Senior Martial Brother Wang’s final words seemed to be full of both admiration and complaints.

Chapter 619: Brightsight Spirit Water

Han Li frowned and asked, “By low grade disciples, do you mean that both Qi Condensation and Foundation Establishment disciples will be participating?”

Senior Martial Brother Wang nodded his head, “That’s right. The Sword Trial Assembly doesn’t differentiate between Qi Condensation cultivators and Foundation Establishment cultivators. They are all lumped together in the competition.”

Han Li said with a doubtful tone, “Then isn’t it unfair towards Qi Condensation cultivators?”

Senior Martial Brother Wang slightly smiled and spoke with a deep tone, “The Sword Trial Assembly was originally meant to compare the cultivation of the Foundation Establishment disciples between sects. Qi Condensation cultivators are only secondary. However, in order to encourage enthusiasm among low grade disciples, they didn’t restrict external affair disciples from participating. Although Qi Condensation cultivators have never been able to seize first place, there have been Qi Condensation cultivators that were able to defeat Foundation Establishment cultivators and force their way into the top ten.”

“Qi Condensation cultivators forcing their way into the top ten? Could it be that their magic tools are immensely powerful?”

Kui Huan shook his head and said, “Hehe, Junior martial brother is truly smart. He already knew the crux of the matter without being told. The Core Formation Seniors of the sects all have their own descendants and occasionally give them a few greatly powerful magic tools so that they may acquire a high rank. As such, it is no surprise that these Qi Condensation disciples would be able to overcome a Foundation Establishment cultivator with an unwieldy magic tool.”

With that said, the doubt on Han Li’s face only grew deeper.

After a moment of thought he said, “From what you’ve said, there should be more rewards than just that for the top ranking. There would be no way that this much effort would be put into the contest for only magic tools.”

Senior Martial Brother Wang slowly said, “Even if Junior martial brother didn’t mention it, I would’ve said it anyways. In fact, the Sword Trial Assembly’s most attractive reward is the opportunity to cleanse one’s eyes in spirit water if one places in the top ten. It is said that the first drop that is shed each time from the holy tree is particularly valuable and can be concocted into the legendary Brightsight Water. Although one’s cultivation won’t increase from using the water, it grants the fantastical ability to see through mist and stone. This is the reason why there are so many that strive their hardest to make it into the top ten. If there were only a few top grade magic tools as a prize, there would be little attraction for the disciples of sect elders of large clans. After all, while the Spirit Tempering Pill is a precious prize, there is only one of them.”

Han Li raised his brow and muttered, “Brightsight Water!”

The name of this spirit water was something that Han Li had seen in many records. However, he wholly didn’t expect for the three sects of Dreamcloud Mountain to actually be capable of refining it. It made even him feel tempted.

With a dreamy tone, Kui Huan added, “Not to mention the first drop of the sacred tree, but even the other materials used to create the Brightsight Water are all extremely rare. It is said that it uses several kinds of thousand year spirit medicine. If it weren’t for the fact that Brightsight Water is only effective on Qi Condensation and Foundation Establishment cultivators, the seniors of the sect would’ve been reluctant to place it as a reward.”

With this, Han Li had acquired a rough understanding of the Sword Trial Assembly. Once he acquired a few of the finer details, he planned on personally participating. After all, since this matter involved both a Spirit Tempering Pill and Brightsight Water, Han

Li couldn't possibly let this opportunity go.

After that, the four chattered a bit more about the Sword Trial Assembly with Han Li before taking their leave.

Han Li watched them go on their flying magic tools until they became black specks in the sky. He then stood in place and began to ponder with a serious expression.

The white fox's soft voice suddenly spoke from his cuff, "What? Is Brother Han tempted? Do you have eyes on the Spirit Tempering Pill or the Brightsight Water?"

Han Li raised his head and bluntly replied, "Don't tell me I can't go after both?" He shook his sleeve and had the fox jump out.

The white fox quickly regained its original size and raised its head. It softly chuckled, "Fellow Daoist Han is truly greedy. However, this is fine too. Regardless of whether it is the Spirit Tempering Pill or the Brightsight Water, they will prove to be rather practical. If you were to miss this opportunity, they would become quite difficult to acquire."

"I am well aware. For now, come back with me to my cave residence. I'll deal with your matter first and leave the deliberations for the Sword Trial Assembly for later." Han Li said with a sullen voice. He then turned around and headed towards his cave residence.

The white fox's eyes revealed anticipation, and she wordlessly followed after him.

Once Han Li entered the cave residence, he immediately started having the artifact spirit transfer onto his Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords. Han Li grew faintly excited at prospect of his magic treasures growing in power with the addition of an artifact spirit.

Originally, there was an extremely small chance for a magic treasure to take in an artifact spirit as the demon beast's soul would do its utmost to resist. But with Silvermoon taking the

initiative to enter Han Li's magic treasure, there wouldn't be much of a problem.

He had also assumed that moving Silvermoon's main soul from the jade scepter would prove to be a troublesome task. However, she seemed to be quite confident and certain, stating that she could handle the preparations all by herself.

When Han Li heard this, he felt slightly less tense and drew a strange spell formation in a quiet room in accordance to the white fox's instructions. He then placed the jade scepter and the white fox into the formation before leaving.

The silent room was under the effects of a soundproofing restriction. If there were any sounds produced from Silvermoon's separation from the jade scepter, Han Li would be completely ignorant, nor did he plan on prying. He knew he had no part to play in moving her soul.

Han Li didn't remain idle after that. He walked into a neighboring quiet room and began his own preparations for accepting an artifact spirit into his magic treasure.

Half a day later, Han Li had finished his preparations and headed towards Silvermoon's room, feeling that it was about time to start. But once he entered her room, Han Li's expression stirred.

The jade scepter and the white fox were properly sitting inside the room's spell formation as he had expected, but the jade scepter's radiance had greatly dimmed and the white fox's fur had grown into a damp and disorderly mess. The fox's eyes were also filled with exhaustion.

When Silvermoon saw that Han Li had entered, she neither moved nor spoke as if she lacked the energy for either.

Han Li's expression relaxed and he gently asked, "How did it go? Was it a success?"

Silvermoon strenuously said, "Although it was painful enough to

kill me, I was able to endure. It seems the preparations on your end are done. Since I have no host artifact, I cannot stay in the white fox's body much longer. I need to join together with your magic treasure immediately, otherwise my soul will scatter."

Han Li nodded his head and picked up the white fox without any hesitation. He then brought it into the neighboring room.

Once Han Li entered, he sealed the room and silence once again took the residence.

...

Three days later, a sound transmission talisman burst into flames outside the medicine garden's restrictions and entered the mist, quickly disappearing from sight.

Two hours later, the mist flashed with azure light to reveal Han Li.

He raised his head to look at the sky and rubbed his chin before releasing a flying sword magic tool and heading straight towards Dayspring Mountain.

Silvermoon's smooth voice suddenly appeared within Han Li's head. "Brother Han, from the message it seems that there is a gathering of disciples from Dayspring Mountain. Could it be related to the Sword Trial Assembly?"

Han Li calmly replied with his spiritual sense, "I'm not sure. But since even someone as out of the way as I received a summons from the mountain lord, even if it isn't related to the Sword Trial Assembly this matter must be important."

Silvermoon softly reminded, "While it would be extremely easy for Brother Han to place first in the competition even if he doesn't reveal his true cultivation, that would certainly attract much attention, perhaps even from the three sects' Nascent Soul cultivators. If that occurs, it is likely the losses would outweigh the gains."

Han Li expressionlessly replied, “I’m fully aware. When did I say that I’d participate in the assembly for certain? And even if I were to participate, there would be no way that I’d place first. I won’t do anything to attract too much attention before I condense a Nascent Soul.”

Silvermoon chuckled, “It seems I’ve said too much. With Brother Han’s rich experience with hardship, there is naturally no need for me to remind you of such a trivial matter as this.” Although this was only her voice, it contained a strong charm.

When Han Li felt this, he couldn’t help but sigh.

Although Silvermoon called herself a wolf, he couldn’t help but feel that she more closely resembled a fox, given her graceful allure.

Furthermore, it seemed that she knew that after becoming his artifact spirit, Han Li wouldn’t do anything to her. While it was fortunate that Silvermoon wholeheartedly cultivated while possessing the fox form, once she possessed Han Li’s flying swords as an artifact spirit, she incessantly spoke with him. It appeared that the jade scepter had been quite a lonely place and she was now venting her feelings.

This caused quite the headache for Han Li. Luckily, he had always found her voice to be gentle and pleasant to the ear! There was even a chance that her temperament would gradually become more mellow as time went by.

Chapter 620: An Unexpected Encounter

As Han Li remained silent, Silvermoon asked yet another question, “I never clearly understood why Brother Han wishes to acquire the Brightsight Water even though it has no effect on cultivators beyond Foundation Establishment stage.”

When Han Li heard this, he faintly smirked and said, “The Hidden Sword Mountain cultivators were mistaken. It isn’t that the Brightsight Water has no effect on high grade cultivators. It’s that high grade cultivators have already cleansed their body’s essence upon forming their core. Their eyes can already see through simple illusion techniques and dense fog, so there isn’t much to be gained from cleansing them such a small amount. Since the amount of spirit water wouldn’t be enough to be effective for a high grade cultivator, it’s better for a low grade cultivator to use it.”

Silvermoon yelped in surprise, “Yi! How does Brother Han know about this?”

“When I was originally in the Scattered Star Seas, I read it in an ancient book. It shouldn’t be false.”

“Could it be that Brother Han has a plan in mind?”

“That’s right. I plan on using this opportunity to draw close to the Spirit Well Tree, and see whether or not I can take some of its roots. I’ll be able to mature the roots with my small bottle if I get ahold of them and could acquire countless Spirit Tempering Pills and limitless Brightsight Water. Of course, I’ll have to acquire the recipes some other way.”

“Hehe, Brother Han’s methods are truly long sighted. In that case, you’ll only need to place in the top ten. Although it will be quite attention-grabbing, it will be far safer than placing first.”

Han Li smiled and thought to say something else when he swept

his gaze across and unconsciously gasped as he slowed to a stop.

In the distance, he spotted a red streak of light that enveloped a beautiful woman with an expression as cold as frost. It was the woman surnamed Mu who had assigned him to the medicine garden.

When the woman drew closer and spotted Han Li, she also wore an expression of surprise. She soon slowed down and stopped at Han Li's side.

"Did you also receive a message to go to Dayspring Mountain?" The woman indifferently said.

Han Li replied with a calm expression, "I did, Martial Aunt Mu! Would Martial Aunt happen to know what happened or why the mountain lord has summoned all of us disciples?"

"I don't know, but it should be related to the Sword Trial Assembly." Mu Peiling curtly replied. Afterwards, she glanced at the flying sword beneath Han Li and frowned, "Although your magic tool is high grade, it isn't specialized for flight. How about I use the Daystar Belt to bring you along? It will save time." With that said, the woman enveloped Han Li in the magic tool's red light without even waiting for his reply.

Han Li was initially surprised, but he had no intention of refusing her offer. As such, he was drawn into her magic tool's red light and was brought along.

As they flew, the woman swept her gaze over Han Li and expressionlessly said, "Did you cultivate the Profound Ice Arts that I gave you? Although cultivating this technique won't greatly increase your base cultivation, it will allow you to use powerful water attribute magic techniques. If you reach Foundation Establishment, you'll be able to smoothly switch the cultivation art to your main cultivation art without any harm."

Having heard that, Han Li found it difficult to respond. If he said

that he had already cultivated it somewhat and she wished to see, he shouldn't have any problems mimicking a few of its water attribute techniques.

Fortunately, this woman merely raised the question in passing and didn't continue speaking.

Silvermoon knew that this wasn't the time to talk to Han Li and stayed quiet in the presence of Mu Peiling.

As the two were about to draw closer to Dayspring Mountain, Mu Peiling's expression stirred as she looked upward.

A moment later, a streak of green light flew down from the sky, blocking the woman's path forward and causing them to stop.

"Junior Martial Sister Mu, I haven't seen you in quite a while. Have you been busy recently? I've sent you quite a few sound transmission talismans but I haven't received a single response."

Han Li revealed a flabbergasted expression. The green light had faded away to reveal a sharp-eared, thin-faced cultivator in his thirties. This was the cultivator surnamed Yan who had blocked Han Li's group when they were about to enter the sect.

When the cold woman saw this person, she revealed surprise but her expression soon grew sullen, "Yan, I am under orders of the Mountain Lord to assemble at the mountain. You dare to block me?"

"Hehe! Junior Martial Sister Mu's words are quite heavy. How could I dare to block you? However, I merely wished to ask if you received the letters of my esteemed father? You see, the elders of our clans have already agreed to our wedding. We should discuss this in the coming days." The cultivator surnamed Yan's gaze wandered over the woman's ample body with desire as he spoke. However, when he spotted Han Li, his expression grew sullen.

The woman surnamed Mu seemed to see through his wicked thoughts and a trace of hostility appeared in her eyes. She scolded

him with an expression like ice, “What’s going through your mind? This is Martial Nephew Han who my master had given to me to instruct. There is nothing else between us. As for the matter of marriage, I naturally cannot oppose my clan’s seniors. However, I will always be in control of when we pair cultivate, if ever. Whenever your cultivation reaches my level, I might consider it. Otherwise, don’t even think about laying a finger on me.”

This woman loathed Yan to the extreme and couldn’t even put up a polite face.

When cultivator Yan heard her, his face went through a series of red and white flushes. But just as he thought to say something, the woman had ran out of patience. With a cold snort, she propelled her magic tool with the entirety of her spiritual power, causing them to flying over cultivator Yan in a large pulse of red light.

Cultivator Yan was greatly flustered and thought to chase them. But after some further thought, he stayed in place with a trace of resentment.

When Han Li turned around to glance at him, he saw an extremely bitter expression on Cultivator Yan’s face.

After a moment of hesitation, Han Li asked with an odd expression, “Martial Aunt Mu, you’re engaged to this man?”

Cultivator Yan was only an early Foundation Establishment cultivator, but Mu Peiling was already at mid Foundation Establishment. Also, their appearances were as different as day and night as well. Han Li felt completely puzzled as to why this woman’s clan had wed her to him.

Although Han Li felt somewhat curious, he originally wished to leave this matter alone. From the woman’s sulking expression, the subject seemed like something that should be ignored. But despite the possibility she would rebuke or ignore him, Han Li’s curiosity won over and he asked anyways.

“It is best of Martial Nephew asks little of my matters!” As soon as Han Li asked, she icily glared at him and replied without emotion.

Of course, Han Li responded by shutting his mouth and revealing an embarrassed expression. However, at that same moment, Han Li faintly heard Silvermoon giggling inside his head for a moment.

It was only a moment before they arrived at a large stage at the center of the mountain.

A large hall of antique design was erected on the stage. The words “Heart Cleansing Hall” were written on the building’s silver signboard.

At that moment, the huge black wooden doors were tightly shut, and the many disciples of Dayspring Mountain were chatting amongst themselves as they gathered outside.

There were about six hundred disciples already densely packed outside of Heart Cleansing Hall. They were all whispering to one another in small groups. However, these people were all Qi Condensation cultivators. None of them were at Foundation Establishment.

The cold woman circled once in the air before landing in front of the hall’s gates. When the nearby cultivators spotted her, they all respectfully saluted her.

The woman waved her hand and walked towards the hall without the slightest hesitation.

Through some unknown method, she gently slapped the door and it opened a sliver. Just after she entered, the door closed once more.

Han Li watched the woman disappear and shook his head, but when he thought to enter the crowd, the nearby cultivators gazed at him with strange looks. A few of the cultivators in the distance even began to point at him.

Chapter 621: Paying Audience

Han Li rubbed his chin and swept his spiritual sense past the crowd of murmuring Qi Condensation cultivators.

“Whose that?”

“What an unfamiliar face, is he a new disciple?”

“Why did he arrive with Martial Aunt Mu?”

“Is he a relative of Martial Aunt Mu? Why else would he arrive together with her?”

Han Li clearly heard many suspicious and envious words from the crowd and he inwardly sighed. Soon after, he stepped away from the hall’s entrance and entered the crowd. Even within the crowd, Han Li could still feel plenty of gazes examining him.

At that moment, Han Li heard a voice transmission with a straightforward tone, “Junior Martial Brother Han. I didn’t think I’d see you again so soon.”

Han Li turned his head in surprise and spotted a large man standing about ten meters behind him. He was Du Dong, the suspicious Qi Condensation cultivator that had entered Dayspring Mountain at the same time as him.

He was currently calling out to Han Li with a wide smile.

An odd expression flickered from Han Li’s eyes but he wore a smile and politely saluted him, “So it turned out to be Senior Martial Brother Du. Are you doing well with Martial Uncle Jiang?”

Martial Uncle Jiang was the white-haired old man that Dong Du was assigned to.

“Yes, I’m doing very well.” The large man chuckled. He appeared to be a rather simple and honest character.

Han Li inwardly sneered, but he maintained a polite exterior as they shared their experiences with each other from the past year.

He heard that the white-haired old man believed that Du Dong was rather talented in refining talismans and wished to heavily nurture him. With that said, Du Dong wore a smile full of excitement.

When Han Li heard him, he felt slight pity towards the white-haired old man. Du Dong wasn't someone who should be nurtured. The old man would likely be implicated in whatever plans this shady individual may have.

Of course, Han Li had no intentions of warning Martial Uncle Jiang and continued to intermittently chat with the large man.

At that moment, the large man suddenly wore a mysterious expression and said, "Junior Martial Brother Han, did you know? Your mentor, Martial Aunt Mu, is the top beauty in Dayspring Mountain, and she is also among the top three beauties in the Drifting Cloud Sect. You may have caused quite the uproar by arriving with her."

"May have? I already did!" Han Li bitterly laughed and glanced around with a trace of helplessness.

Du Dong then changed the subject and casually asked, "Since you two arrived together, did Martial Aunt say anything regarding what this meeting is about?"

"Oh! No, but it seems Senior Martial Brother Du heard something? Wouldn't it be better for you to tell me?"

Han Li's calm expression was replaced with a mysterious smile as he deeply looked at Dong Du.

Under Han Li's penetrating gaze, the large man's honest smile had frozen. Du Dong was left overwhelmed from a sensation of immense scrutiny as if his secrets were laid bare.

But soon Han Li turned his head and this feeling disappeared as if it were merely a misperception. Regardless, the man was left bewildered and he quickly bid his farewells before heading to meet

with a group of acquainted Dayspring Mountain disciples, not daring to stay in Han Li's company.

A slight sneer momentarily appeared on Han Li's face when he saw him walking away. At that moment, Silvermoon spoke within his mind, "Brother Han, did you deliberately scare him? I fear that he will later hold suspicion towards you. Won't he be a detriment?"

Han Li responded using his spiritual sense, "I might not clearly know his identity, but I am certain that nothing good will come of him so I made sure that he'd take the initiative to distance himself from me. If something major did happen, then I will avoid being implicated. As for any suspicion he might hold, how would that affect me? He would merely become more careful of me, and it's not like he could succeed in attacking me. I merely wish not to be associated with him. I have no intention of interfering with his plans."

Silvermoon didn't reply, and it appeared that she recognized the reason in Han Li's words. In the end, if Du Dong maliciously conspired against the sect, anybody close to him would certainly come under the suspicious notice of the sect's upper echelon, something that Han Li would certainly wish to avoid.

In the following moments, Han Li examined the crowd of disciples in solitude.

There were disciples of both genders and of all ages. There were also those with cultivations that didn't match their age, such as young cultivators already at the peak of Qi Condensation.

There were also a few gorgeous young woman, but all of them had a group of similarly aged men at their side. It seems young, beautiful female cultivators were pursued the same way in every sect.

Just as Han Li was lost in thought, the hall's gate eventually opened and a dignified voice spoke out, leaving the Qi

Condensation disciples in silenced awe.

“All Dayspring Mountain Disciples are to enter the hall!”

This faint man’s voice belonged to the Dayspring Mountain Lord, the mid Core Formation cultivator surnamed Xin that Han Li had met when he was assigned to the mountain.

When the disciples outside the hall heard him, they all lowered their heads and respectfully said, “We sincerely accept Martial Ancestor’s orders!” Afterwards, the crowd immediately walked into the hall in two orderly lines. Because Han Li was among the last to enter, he saw that Du Dong was also among the last to enter the Cleansing Heart Hall.

The area within the large hall was vast, spanning at least a kilometer wide with several tens of lofty pillars scattered throughout. Each of the pillars were embedded with smoothly carved moonlight stones, illuminating the hall with a faint white glow. The hall was entirely empty apart from the two thrones that were placed at the very front.

Within these two chairs sat a white-robed man with a scholarly appearance and a grey-clothed old man with fierce eyes and messy hair.

In front of the two thrones stood two rows of over ten Foundation Establishment cultivators.

The elegant beauty surnamed Mu and the youth surnamed Yu that had led Han Li into the sect were both standing in the second row. As for the youth surnamed Miao that had questioned him when he had entered the sect, he was standing in the first row, looking just as sickly and pale as before.

When the disciples entered the hall, they all simultaneously knelt and saluted the two sitting in the chairs, “Disciples pay their respects to Martial Ancestor Xin and Martial Ancestor Yu!”

“That’s enough, stand!” The middle aged man swept his arm

with a smile and had the crowd of disciples stand.

The Qi Condensation disciples then split off into two rows and stood at each side of the hall. Han Li and Du Dong both happened to stand near the hall's entrance.

Han Li swept his spiritual sense past the old man with the fierce expression and found that he was only an early Core Formation cultivator. He was the deputy mountain lord that he had heard of but haven't seen, "Martial Uncle Yu".

After Han Li inspected him, he recalled his spiritual sense from a lack of interest.

In the next moment, Mountain Lord Xin began to slowly speak, "I'm sure you disciples already know why I've summoned you all here. Yesterday, our sect received an official letter from the Ancient Sword Sect. The next Sword Trial Assembly will be held in a half year's time. As we hosted the last competition, it is the Thousand Possibilities Sect's turn to host it in the east of the Dreamcloud Mountains. In accordance to the usual practice, each of the three sects will send thirty disciples to participate in the Sword Trial Assembly. The final ten that remain in the competition will be heavily rewarded. As such, we must first select the best of our sect to participate."

With that said, he paused for a moment before continuing, "Of course, each of the sect's six mountain lords will be able nominate one person that will be able to participate in the Sword Trial Assembly without measuring their skill. As for the other twenty-four slots, they will be vied for by the disciples that meet the requirements. These victorious disciples will then be advised by sect elders in the time remaining before the Sword Trial Assembly. Yesterday, I had a meeting with the Sect Master and the other mountain lords where we decided that the sect's Sword Trial Selection will take place in a month. But first, I must give an explanation of the two conditions required to participate for those that are unaware. Any participants must be less than thirty years

old and possess a minimum cultivation at the tenth layer of Qi Condensation, else they will be barred from joining. That is all. Now, if you meet the minimum conditions and wish to vie for a position, you have until the incense burns away to decide. Oh yes, the disciple that I and Deputy Mountain Lord Yun selected to participate without trial is your Martial Aunt Mu. Jun'er, go ahead and light the incense."

"As you bid, Master." The youth surnamed Yu immediately stepped forward and swiftly took out a bronze cauldron from his storage pouch. He then set it at the center of the hall and placed a stick of incense in it.

With a flash of light from his hand, fragrant smoke began to spiral towards the sky.

Chapter 622: Preliminary Selection

While none dared to make a commotion, those who held the qualifications to participate became restless as they watched the incense stick burn.

When the incense stick burned halfway, Silvermoon saw that Han Li wore an aloof expression and couldn't help but ask, "Will Brother Han be participating?"

"Why wouldn't I? With the other disciples all stirring in excitement, it would draw quite a bit of attention if I didn't."

With that said, Silvermoon grew silent.

A short moment later, the incense stick had completely burned away and the mountain lord opened his eyes.

"Those that don't meet the conditions or are unwilling to join may now leave."

"As you bid, Martial Ancestor!" A majority of the present disciples then bowed and slowly left the hall.

Apart from the Foundation Establishment cultivators, there were only about forty young disciples left in the room.

When the middle-aged man examined the group, he nodded his head with satisfaction, "Good, all the disciples present fulfill the conditions. I am quite happy. Even if none of you are selected to participate, your horizons will be greatly widened as you fight against your Martial Brothers from the other mountains. It will provide great benefits to your future cultivation. Your Martial Uncle will now explain some important points about the competition. As for Martial Ancestor Yu and I, we have matters to attend to and will be departing first."

With that said, Mountain Lord Xin and Deputy Mountain Lord Yun departed from the hall.

With a sickly appearance, the youth surnamed Miao coughed several times before calmly speaking to the Qi Condensation cultivators, “Since the Mountain Lord has handed over this matter to me, please listen carefully, Martial Nephews. After all, this competition will be a test of skill against your fellow sect members and there are things that must be avoided.”

“First of all, vicious and deadly techniques and magic tools are disallowed in the contest. Otherwise, you will be expelled from the sect and will have your cultivation scattered. Also...”

A quarter hour later, Han Li and the rest of the disciples in the hall walked out. Most of them flew off with expressions of excitement.

Han Li glanced at their departing figures and shook his head before taking to the skies and flying back to his cave residence. The journey back was smooth and uneventful.

Inside his cave residence, he began his preparations for the sect contest. Since he couldn't display too much power in his pursuit for one of the twenty-four positions, he had to make use of talismans and several magic tools that he hadn't touched in countless years.

Top grade magic tools were more than plentiful. He had plundered tens of them from the Core Formation cultivators that he had personally slain. But in order to draw less attention to himself, he had to carefully select only a few of them. And since he didn't intend on using these magic tools in the sect selection, he also began to refine large quantities of mid level elementary talismans. He planned on using these talismans to crush his low grade opponents in a single blow.

Of course, he wouldn't be able to make it through on talismans alone. Han Li especially refreshed his knowledge on the “Flame Handling Arts” he had acquired all those years ago from an old Daoist in the prince's mansion of the [State of Yue](#). Although it

wouldn't prove particularly useful to high grade cultivators, it will prove more than effective in duping Qi Condensation and Foundation Establishment cultivators.

When Han Li had first acquired the Flame Handling Arts all those years ago, he had gained many insights from it. But with his current cultivation as a late Core Formation cultivator, it had little value to him. As a result of only a few days of effort, he grasped the entirety of the methods of transforming flames. He had even acquired subtle understandings that exceeded what had been recorded in the Flame Handling Arts.

For the rest of these days, Han Li wholeheartedly spent his time refining various talismans.

During that time, his gold-silver Gold Devouring Beetles had already begun to cannibalize one another, much to his joy. He was sure that while the Gold Devouring Beetles were still far away from complete evolution, they were growing quite close to the legendary all-devouring stage.

However, the Weeping Soul Beast in the neighboring room was proving quite troublesome for Han Li. It had remained soundly asleep this entire time without any sign of awakening. Fortunately, with the Weeping Soul Pearl refined within his body, he knew that there was nothing wrong with the beast. However, he couldn't help but feel worried. After all, it was taking too long to complete its transformation....

A month later, the Drifting Cloud Sect's main mountain was bustling with exceptional liveliness. Cultivators began to unceasingly gather at the top of the mountain, with several thousands cultivators that came to observe the contest. It appeared everyone that was off duty had come.

While they weren't participating the battle, watching other cultivators battle in a contest of skill was a vastly enriching experience.

The contest was being held on three large, flat stages near the top of the mountain. Each of the stages were surrounded by spell formations over three hundred meters wide. They all raised a huge dome of light around the stage to prevent the spectators from receiving any injuries.

There were three late Foundation Establishment cultivators acting as judges to prevent any deaths from occurring.

The sect selection was now undergoing its third day. The past two days had resulted in many cultivators being sadly defeated.

In total, the selection contest was being conducted between five hundred cultivators. Although there were three stages to conduct battles, this process would take many days given the large number of participants.

That being said, the forty cultivators of Dayspring Mountain had been among the smaller factions. They paled in comparison to the number from Firecloud Mountain which had over a hundred disciples participating.

There were only four Foundation Establishment cultivators in the contest, but they weren't required to fight until the final round. Although they weren't among those that were chosen by the mountain lords, they had still managed to reach Foundation Establishment before the age of thirty. Since they were undoubtedly talented individuals, they would be given a position with just a single victory against a Qi Condensation cultivator.

At that moment, Han Li silently stood among several Dayspring Mountain cultivators. They were all watching a battle occur inside a light barrier between a cultivator of Dayspring Mountain and White Phoenix Mountain.

White Phoenix was a peculiar existence amongst the six mountains. Not only did the mountain have two female Core Formation mountain lords, they primarily relied on female disciples. As a result, their mountain possessed few disciples and

only a dozen female cultivators were participating in the battle.

The Dayspring Mountain disciple that was fighting appeared somewhat aged, but he was actually in his late twenties. Although he was an external affair disciple, he was born in a reputable cultivation clan in the State of Xi. That was why he possessed a high grade magic tool of considerable power, a white gold dagger-axe. Although the young female cultivator from White Phoenix Mountain was being pushed back, her eyes were full of hope.

The Dayspring Mountain cultivators beside Han Li were clearly good friends with the male cultivator and cheered him on with excitement.

But just as the man's white dagger-axe was about to chop down, the woman raised her brow and shout a ball of azure light from her hand, blocking the white streak. The woman's body then blurred and she disappeared without a trace.

When the man saw this, he hurriedly formed an incantation seal with his hands as his expression vastly changed. Just as he thought to force back the woman with a magic technique, a red mist suddenly enveloped him from behind.

Then with a flop, the Dayspring Mountain disciple fell to the ground.

The lanky cultivator that was floating above the stage announced, "White Phoenix Mountain's Jin Rong is victorious."

When the female cultivator heard this, she respectfully saluted the judge and took out a small bottle from her storage pouch. After she placed it next to the nose of the unconscious cultivator, he began to slowly regain consciousness.

Once he realized what had happened, the Dayspring Mountain cultivator walked from the stage with a deep red expression. Afterwards, the female cultivator flew out from the spell formation with a proud appearance. The nearby female cultivators

immediately surrounded her and showered her with praise, attracting the attention of a few nearby male cultivators.

Above the dome of light, the lanky cultivator expressionlessly announced, “The next battle will be between Dayspring Mountain’s Han Li and Firecloud Mountain’s Xun Tong!” Although his voice wasn’t loud, the nearby cultivators heard him clearly.

When Han Li heard this, he smiled and slowly walked into the spell formation.

Not long after, a handsome, white-clothed cultivator entered from the other side. As soon as this person entered, an uproar was raised amongst the nearby spectators.

In Chapter 294, Han Li acquired an interesting book from an old Qi Condensation cultivator that was surprisingly useful.

Chapter 623: Overwhelming Supremacy

“That’s Junior Martial Brother Xun! He just entered the sect a few years ago!”

“It’s said that this Junior Martial Brother possesses Heavenly Yangfire Veins. Is it true?”

“Isn’t the Xun Clan a cultivation clan of great renown in our State of Xu? Surely he must possess mighty magic tools!”

“Who is this Junior Martial Brother Han? I don’t think I’ve seen him before. Did he just enter the sect?”

“I got to say that Han Li is sure out of luck. He came across a fearsome opponent!”

Before the battle even started, Han Li could clearly hear a lively discussion coming from outside the stage’s light barrier.

‘Heavenly Yangfire Veins?’ Han Li’s expression slightly stirred upon hearing this and examined his opponent with interest. In addition to his handsome appearance and tall figure, his cultivation was quite decent at the twelfth layer of Qi Condensation.

Seeing that Han Li had an ordinary appearance and only possessed a cultivation at the tenth layer, a trace of disdain appeared on the white-clothed youth’s face, but he still saluted him nevertheless.

When Han Li saw this, he inwardly sneered and indifferently returned the salute with a faint smile. The white-clothed youth revealed a trace of anger at his casual response.

At that moment, the lanky cultivator up above indifferently said, “Start the battle!”

As soon as this was said, the white-clothed youth wore a harsh expression and immediately formed an incantation seal with his

hands. A flash of fiery light suddenly pulsed from his body, enveloping him in a barrier of scorching light. He then waved his hand and opened his fingers, revealing an egg-sized red ball that floated from his grasp. The white-clothed youth then started to mutter an incantation in preparation of attacking Han Li with the magic tool.

When Han Li saw this, he felt a faint sense of familiarity with this method and couldn't help but feel surprised.

At that moment, many yelps of astonishment came from the outside.

“Quickly look, Junior Martial Brother Xun instantly enveloped himself in a fire attribute barrier without a talisman. He really does have Heavenly Yangfire Veins!”

“What's that? That bead in his hand seems to be his clan's famed Firewave Bead. That youngster facing him is certain to lose! Perhaps the match will be decided in an instant!”

Han Li inwardly sneered and calmly waved his hand, taking out a stack of about forty talismans from his storage pouch.

He raised his head to look at the white-clothed youth only to discover that the youth was completely focused on using his magic tool and was oblivious to Han Li's actions. It appeared he held absolute confidence in his barrier.

Since this was the case, Han Li decided to cease any pleasantries and slapped his hands together. In a burst of red light, forty fist-sized fireballs shot out from his hands in a dense barrage towards his opponent. The scene caused the spectators to shout in surprise.

At that same moment, the Firewave Bead floating above the white-clothed cultivator's hand was set ablaze and was now ready to attack. But just as he was basking in his delight, he heard the spectators cry in surprise and couldn't help but raise his head in confusion. As a result, he caught sight of several tens of fireballs

simultaneously striking his barrier.

With a series of loud explosions and flashes of glaring red light, the youth's senses were overwhelmed. As for the light barrier surrounding him, it shattered in a pitiful display, lasting for only a moment.

The roasting flames rushed towards him before his eyes and were one step away from completely enveloping him. Although this young talent was gifted with the Heavenly Yangfire Veins and had been meticulously nurtured by his sect elders, he now found himself on the verge of death. He cried out with a pale face and lost himself to fear, wanting to turn around and flee. But during this moment of peril, the youth felt his collar tighten and his body became lighter. He was immediately lifted in the air and the wave of flames completely passed him by.

Still in a panic, the white-clothed cultivator turned around to see the lanky judge grasping him by the collar. He indifferently muttered, "Dayspring Mountain's Han Li is victorious."

At that moment, the white-clothed youth realized that he had already lost. His face then turned deathly pale after realizing that he had been easily defeated by talismans of the lowest grade.

As for the many cultivators spectating, after recovering from their shock, they all looked at each other in dismay. They all knew that while the fireball talisman was the simplest low grade elementary talisman, they each cost a spirit stone to purchase.

However, Han Li had used forty of these talismans in a single breath, equating to forty spirit stones that had been thrown away in the fight. That was the price of a good low-grade magic tool. This wasn't merely being loose with money; he was completely squandering it. Could it be that he planned on sparing none of his wealth in order to prevail in the selection?

Underneath the peculiar gazes of the Drifting Cloud Sect, Han Li saluted the lanky Foundation Establishment cultivator and walked

out of the light barrier with an unchanged expression.

As for the white-clothed youth, he resentfully glared at Han Li as he departed, but underneath the cold watch of the lanky cultivator, he could only helplessly depart.

With his first battle concluded, Han Li had no thoughts of observing other's battles and returned to his cave residence.

Two days later, the first round of the competition came to a close. There were many marvelous battles during the contest that were being enthusiastically discussed by the spectators.

While Han Li's use of tens of fireball talismans had left many speechless, it had aroused much admiration as well. Many of the spectators believed Han Li to be a disciple of a large clan for him to be able to spend so many spirit stones.

This had led to Han Li developing somewhat of a reputation among some of the spectating disciples.

In the second round of the competition, Han Li was selected to fight in the afternoon of the first day. He arrived at the center of the stage with a calm expression. A few of the disciples that had watched Han Li's last battle were currently muttering to each other.

"It's that guy from Dayspring Mountain. Two days ago, he defeated his opponent in a single blow by using several tens of talismans."

"Is that the truth? He appears completely unremarkable. Could he be feeling a hole in his pocket?"

"Yi! There doesn't seem to be a cultivation clan with the name of Han in our State of Xu. Could he have come from a different country?"

Han Li listened to all of their words with a calm expression. He was currently examining his opponent with a calm expression.

He was a male disciple in his mid twenties who possessed a refined appearance. He had well-fitted azure robes, and apart from the storage pouch at his waist, there was nothing about him that seemed out of place. He was watching Han Li with a solemn expression. It seemed their discussions had reached his ear as he soon frowned.

“Start.” As soon as that was said, the young disciple reached for his storage pouch and rushed to raise his hands. In a flash of white light, two sparkling icicles shot in Han Li’s direction. His body then flickered with azure light before directly pouncing towards Han Li in a gale.

It seemed this person had heard of Han Li. He thought to forcefully interrupt Han Li by using the two ice spike talismans and charged towards Han Li with a body lightening technique.

After some brief surprise, Han Li couldn’t help but smile. His body then blurred, having the two icicles brush past his body.

Then seeing that his opponent was excitedly charging towards him with an outreached hand glowing with yellow light, Han Li grew indistinct before disappearing by using his Shifting Smoke Steps.

The young disciple’s pounce had completely missed, much to his shock. The yellow radiance in his hand dimmed as well. It was actually a net-type magic tool.

But before the young disciple could search for Han Li, he suddenly felt a sharp pain from the back of his neck. The world around him became black and he fell to the ground, oblivious to what had happened.

A trace of astonishment flickered across the lanky cultivator’s face, but he calmly declared, “Dayspring Mountain’s Han Li is victorious!”

A moment ago, Han Li had appeared behind his opponent and

chopped at the back of his opponents neck, knocking him out.

Several cultivators had rushed onto the stage and examined the unconscious disciple. After nodding to the lanky cultivator, signifying that there was nothing wrong, they dragged him off the stage.

Of course, an uproar was raised from the spectators outside.

“Did you see that? What magic technique did he use to appear behind his opponent in the blink of an eye? That’s inconceivable!”

“Fool, that isn’t a magic technique! That was clearly a movement technique from the mortal world’s martial arts, but I’ve never seen one used with such high skill!” A few of the more experienced disciples managed to recognize the source of Han Li’s movements.

Chapter 624: Discussion

On the thirteenth day of the Drifting Cloud Sect's selection, the final round was currently being concluded.

At that moment, there were eight Core Formation cultivators assembled together in a pavilion at the center of the mountain discussing something. Two of them were the mountain lords of Dayspring Mountain, the middle-aged man surnamed Xin and the fierce-looking, grey-clothed old man surnamed Yu.

A blue-robed old man with a white fluttering beard and a faceful of wrinkles frowned and asked, "Are there any Junior Martial Brothers willing to escort the disciples to the Sword Trial Assembly?"

A middle-aged man with a lazy expression and a long, thin mustache snorted and indifferently replied, "Senior Martial Brother Feng, the Sword Trial Assembly will always be dominated by the Ancient Sword Sect, and that vitriolic fellow Jiang Yun is always the one to bring the Ancient Sword Sect members. I don't wish to be embarrassed without reason."

A yellow-faced old man shook his head and said, "That's right! I've even heard that in the past few years, the Ancient Sword Sect picked up a disciple that possessed a Ninesword Constitution. They will be certain to have him participate. As such, there is no hope of winning this Sword Trial Assembly. Although we do hold a few disciples that possess a peculiar constitution, they are inferior in comparison. And there is also news that the Hundred Possibilities Sect had acquired a direct descendant of the Guan Clan. It is said that while he was still in Qi Condensation, he defeated his clan's elders by using his personally refined magic tools. I fear this could be quite a difficult trip!"

When the white-haired old man heard this, he revealed an expression of dissatisfaction. He gravely said, "Junior Martial

Brothers, you aren't wrong. The Sword Trial Assembly has already become a stage for the Ancient Sword Sect to display their power, but that is something beyond our control. If our sect does not send over any disciples that participate in the assembly, I fear we won't even acquire a quarter of the Wine Nectar. Besides, this could easily cause the Ancient Sword Sect to view us with hostility. It would be detrimental to our sect's development in the Dreamcloud Mountain for ages to come. We have more things to worry about, like the many clans that are covetously eyeing the three sects of Dreamcloud Mountain. We cannot reveal any weakness to them."

A square-faced, red-robed old man with a formal appearance suddenly proposed, "Since Senior Martial Brother Feng said this, I'll be the one to bring the disciples. Rather, I haven't seen the Hundred Possibilities Sect's Elder Chang Zheng in quite a while. A chance to chat would be nice."

Old Man Feng glanced at him and hesitantly said, "Junior Martial Brother Duan, as the Mountain Lord of Firecloud Mountain, you have the most disciples under you. It would be improper for you to leave the sect."

The red-robed old man nonchalantly said, "It is of no matter. Junior Martial Brother Li will still be there to handle Firecloud Mountain. Besides, it's not like I'm leaving the Dreamcloud Mountains. I'm just traveling to the western range."

With that said, the white-haired old man didn't persist in his objections and nodded his head. He then swept his gaze over the other cultivators before staring at the fierce-looking, grey-clothed old man. He slowly said, "Junior Martial Brother Yu, I know that you don't have any pressing responsibilities at Dayspring Mountain. How about you assist Junior Martial Brother Duan? Junior Martial Brother Xin, do you have any objections?"

The middle-aged man surnamed Xin faintly smiled and said, "Of course not. I'm sure Junior Martial Brother Yu is completely willing to go."

The grey-clothed old man cold expression stirred for a long while before he briefly said, “Fine, I’ll go!”

The white-haired old man smiled and nodded his head, saying, “The group of disciples will be headed by Junior Martial Brother Duan. Junior Martial Brother Yu and Junior Marital Sister Song of White Phoenix Mountain will be accompanying him. Once the final round has been concluded, you will meet with thirty selected disciples and give them guidance. Perhaps there will be a chance for our sect yet. After all, we have quite a few powerful candidates this time around. We should be able to give the Ancient Sword Sect and the Hundred Possibilities Sect quite the contest.”

A sly-faced cultivator that had been hiding in the corner yelped in surprise, “Junior Martial Sister Song will also be coming along? How did I not know of this? If that’s the case, I can take the place of Junior Martial Brother Yu.” When the rest of the cultivators in the pavilion heard him, there was a brief moment of restlessness. Three of the cultivators wore an annoyed expression.

The white-haired old man’s face grew sullen and he snorted, “Junior Martial Brother Meng, what do you mean? I’ve spoken for half a day, and you didn’t speak a single word. But now that you’ve heard Junior Martial Sister Song wishes to go, you jump at the chance. I’ll tell you the truth, Junior Martial Sister Song raised the condition that she would only accompany the disciples if I didn’t mention that she was going to begin with. Otherwise, given her temperament, why else would she depart from White Phoenix Mountain?”

As this old man had already reached late Core Formation, the sly-faced early Core Formation cultivator didn’t dare to dispute this and lowered his head.

There were other cultivators that were also tempted, but each of them glanced at one another in dismay, not daring to speak.

At that moment, footsteps suddenly came from the outside. A

man's voice said, "Reporting to Master and Martial Uncles, the last round has just finished. Three Foundation Establishment disciples have been selected along with twenty-one Qi Condensation cultivators. I've come with the list of names."

The white-robed cultivator's expression relaxed and he said, "Oh! Since that's the case, come in. Let's take a look."

"As you wish!" The man respectfully replied. Afterwards, he opened the door and entered, revealing himself to be a late Foundation Establishment cultivator with a stately appearance and a tall body.

"Here are the names and details of the twenty-four finalists." The man took out a white jade slip from his robes and handed it over to the old man.

"I'll be taking a look first!" The old man nodded his head and took the jade slip into his hand.

"Huh?" After taking a look at it with his spiritual sense, he revealed a trace of astonishment.

The red-clothed cultivator's expression stirred and he asked, "What's the matter? Is there something amiss with the list of names?"

The others also oddly glanced at the old man.

"It's nothing. Junior Martial Brothers have a look!" With that said, the old man calmly passed the jade slip to the yellow-skinned old man at his side.

After taking a look at the jade slip, he also revealed astonishment and handed the jade slip to someone else. Not longer after, everyone had looked at the jade slip and each of them had turbulent expressions.

When the Dayspring Mountain Lord Xin read through the jade slip, his expression stirred with particular surprise.

The middle-aged man with the thin mustache sighed and slowly said, “I truly didn’t expect that there would be six disciples from Dayspring Mountain to be selected. It seems Junior Martial Brother Xin has instructed his disciples well.”

The sly-faced cultivator sourly said, “It seems Junior Martial Brother Xin is determined to win this Sword Trial Assembly. You must’ve spent quite some effort to cultivate these disciples!” Only three disciples from his Hidden Sword Mountain had made it on the list, which lost him a considerable amount of face.

“No, it definitely wasn’t like that. I myself am surprised to see so many people from my Dayspring Mountain being selected. And two of them are even at the tenth layer of Qi Condensation, named Han Li and Du Dong. If I’m not mistaken, those two entered the sect just this past year. It is baffling how they managed to take a place on the list.” The middle-aged man surnamed Xin then muttered to himself for a moment and calmly said, “Martial Nephew Gao, how did they manage to acquire victory?”

The man who had just entered the room promptly replied, “Their methods weren’t anything strange. Martial Nephew Du Dong possesses an extremely powerful ice attribute top-grade magic tool. It seems capable of both attacking and defending, and it perfectly compliments his techniques as well. As a result, once he froze the ground with his magic tool, all of his opponents were left helpless against his strikes.”

The middle-aged man with the long mustache interrupted, asking, “Oh! What kind of magic tool is it? Can you give us a description?”

“It is a wheel type magic tool. It has a diameter of about a foot and is engraved with a curved moon. It sparkles with white light when it is activated, can activate an ice attribute barrier in an instant, and can attack with a mist of freezing Qi.”

The middle-aged man’s eyes flickered and he said with surprise,

“That seems quite similar to the clan suppressing treasure of the Du Clan, the Ice Moon Wheel. The Du Clan was exterminated two hundred years ago. Could this Du Dong be a descendant?”

The white-haired old man curled his beard and unhurriedly said, “En! That seems quite possible. After all, the Du Clan wasn’t a small clan. There were sure to be a few direct lineage disciples that escaped calamity and lived in concealment. They probably now believe that with so many years having passed, their enemies are no longer paying any attention to them. As such, they revealed themselves once more.”

Chapter 625: The Weeping Soul Beasts

Reappearance

“Senior Martial Brother’s words are reasonable. But while it is reasonable that Du Dong managed to triumph given his Ice Moon Wheel, what about the one named Han Li? Does he also have a high grade magic tool?” The thin-mustached middle-aged man asked.

“Although I don’t know if Martial Nephew Han possesses any high grade magic tools, his methods are quite costly.”

“What do you mean by costly?” The yellow-faced old man asked with obvious interest.

The Foundation Establishment cultivator explained, “In the first round, Martial Nephew Han Li defeated his opponent by using several tens of fireball talismans to break through his opponent’s barrier before they could react. In the rounds afterwards, he complimented his talismans with the use of mortal martial arts and an ingenious flame manipulation technique to arduously triumph against his opponents.”

The white-haired old man sullenly said, “The martial arts and flame technique aren’t particularly notable. There are many who use them. However, he must possess many spirit stones to be able to use so many talismans. This amount may mean nothing to us, but to a Qi Condensation cultivator it is rather extravagant. Have you investigated this disciple?”

The Foundation Establishment cultivator respectfully replied, “I have. A few of his acquaintainted disciples noted that he is skilled in talisman refinement despite being a vagrant cultivator, and he possesses quite a bit of wealth. That is how he is able to so generously use low grade talismans.”

The white-haired old man’s expression relaxed and he muttered,

“Oh, so it was like that. It seems there are no problems with the two then. However, since this person is capable of refining talismans, wouldn't it be better to have him join Firecloud Mountain?”

Cultivator Xin faintly smiled and said, “Senior Martial Brother Feng, that reasoning is a bit amiss. Our Dayspring Mountain also possesses disciples that are skilled in talisman refinement. They will be able to mentor him properly. Senior Martial Brother Duan, don't tell me you actually want him!”

The red-clothed cultivator waved his hand and grinned, “Hehe! Our Firecloud Mountain already possesses many talisman refining disciples. One more or one less won't make much difference. I won't fight Junior Martial Brother Xin over a single disciple.”

Cultivator Xin responded with a silent smile.

In the following moments, the Core Formation cultivators chatted about a few sect matters before bidding their farewells.

...

Han Li had already returned to his cave residence and was standing outside his spirit beast room with a solemn expression. His gaze wandered as he stared into the room.

Not long before when the disciples of Dayspring Mountain were congratulating Han Li over his victory in the final round of placements, the Weeping Soul Pearl began to burn within his body, much to Han Li's alarm. It was about to finally awaken and complete its evolution.

Han Li was overjoyed and hurriedly took his leave in order to return to his cave residence. But when he arrived outside the spirit beast room, he was greatly shocked by what he saw.

For some unknown reason, the spirit beast room was completely devoid of light and was filled with ghastly wisps of black Ghost Qi, spilling an extremely icy Yin Qi out from the room.

The Weeping Soul Beast could no longer be seen. Instead, a three meter tall cocoon had taken its place at the corner of the room. It was emitting a jet-black light and faintly released black glimmers as if it were alive.

Han Li instantly knew that the Weeping Soul Beast was within the black cocoon, and he grew immensely excited. However, a trace of worry blossomed within his heart as well.

Han Li wasn't about to boldly enter the room. After some pondering, he decided to meditate outside the spirit beast room. From what he had previously read in old records, during a spirit beast's evolution, it was best for its master to stay close and wait by its side. However, the spirit beast must be left alone during its evolution unless it failed in its transformation and suffered a grave injury.

With apprehension lingering in his heart, Han Li felt time slowly pass by.

Han Li originally assumed that the transformation would take several days at the very least before the cocoon was broken. But on the morning of the second day that he sat outside the spirit beast room, the black cocoon of light began to change.

As Han Li remained cross-legged on the ground, he suddenly heard a clear explosion from the room. Although the sound was muffled, he opened his eyes with delight. He peered into the room and saw that a majority of the ghostly Qi had been absorbed into the black cocoon of light in the corner of the room.

The black light then suddenly grew dazzling, causing Han Li to unconsciously turn his eyes away. In the next moment, Han Li felt a strange but somewhat familiar aura coming from the room.

With raised brows, Han Li stood up without any further thought and lightly pushed open the door to the spirit beast room.

Han Li swept his gaze through the room from the outside and

saw that the black cocoon had already broken in two, and was empty as could be. But aside from the broken cocoon in the corner of the room, nothing else could be seen.

Han Li was startled and thought to release his spiritual sense when black light began to shine from an empty corner of the room. With a low-pitched cry, a black blur shot towards Han Li.

In his alarm, Han Li thought to dodge out of the way, but after some thought, he remained in place. As a result, a small, icy object flew into Han Li's chest, and he grabbed onto it with both hands.

"This is?" Han Li glanced at the small object in his grasp and couldn't help but appear shocked.

There was currently a tiny, fist-sized monkey in his hands that should undoubtedly be the evolved Weeping Soul Beast. At first glance, there was nothing that had changed about it apart from its silver fur turning pitch-black. But after glancing at it several more times, Han Li eventually discovered two differences from before. The Weeping Soul Beast now had a slim cavity between its two nostrils. After meticulously glancing into it, he discovered nothing out of the ordinary about it.

The Weeping Soul Beast had always relied on the soul swallowing light from its nose to suppress souls and ghosts. Did the appearance of an additional hole in its nose mean that this ability would become more powerful?

Not knowing whether he should laugh or cry, Han Li decided to look forward to testing this in the future!

As for the other difference in the Weeping Soul Beast, for some unknown reason a crimson pattern depicting an evil spirit had appeared on the fur of its back. The evil spirit on its back had a single horn and three eyes. Although it appeared rather faint, it also appeared true to life and gave any onlookers a feeling of malicious pressure.

Silvermoon clicked her tongue in astonishment at the Weeping Soul Beast's evolution, but she couldn't offer an explanation on what it was.

Because Han Li had refined the Weeping Soul Pearl, the beast had become far more affectionate with Han Li. It appeared delighted as it rubbed its small furry head on Han Li's jacket.

Han Li couldn't help but smile at the small black monkey in his hand. However, he faintly felt that the monkey seemed to possess human-like emotions.

He played with the monkey for a moment with great interest before carefully putting it away in his spirit beast pouch once he saw it yawn from fatigue.

Once Han Li departed from the spirit beast room, he took a look at the neighboring insect room and saw that only several tens of gold-silver Gold Devouring Beetles remained. It appeared they had already finished devouring one another and were about to lay eggs.

Han Li was satisfied to see that these beetles were all slightly larger than before. He then left the insect room and returned to his quiet room for routine cultivation.

When he claimed victory in the selection, the judge had already told him that he was able to receive guidance from a Core Formation cultivator. However, they were to continue to bitterly cultivate before their turn came. The guidance would only last for a few sparse days, and he would be notified by voice transmission talisman once it was his turn.

Han Li wasn't worried in the slightest about receiving guidance from a Core Formation cultivator. He'd deal with it once he was summoned.

Currently, he was holding the jade spirit well in his hands and was cultivating inside his quiet room. As for the artifact spirit Silvermoon, it was cultivating in the neighboring room inside of

the demon fox body.

With that being said, it was rather inconceivable that Silvermoon was able to cultivate in a possessed body.

According to what Silvermoon said, although she had the cultivation equivalent to late Core Formation stage, once she entered the fox body, she possessed the cultivation of a low grade demon beast that had only reached grade one.

As a result, although she could display her astonishing cultivation in the demon fox's body, she could only maintain it for a very short time. Additionally, as an artifact spirit her cultivation was eternally stagnant. Fortunately, Silvermoon was able to slowly increase the cultivation of the demon fox body over time, making the body her future home.

As a result, Han Li fed a few medicinal pills to Silvermoon's fox body, allowing her cultivation to rise at an astonishing speed.

Chapter 626: Harmonic Mind

Three months passed by in the blink of an eye while Han Li remained in bitter cultivation in his cave residence.

During this time, Kui Huan's group had paid a visit to Han Li to apologetically tell him that they had informed the sect elders of Han Li's skills in talisman refinement, hoping that he wouldn't take offence.

Because Han Li had already planned on using his talisman refinement techniques as a cover, he didn't mind in the slightest. After giving a few words of forgiveness, he sent the group of Qi Condensation cultivators on their way.

As for Dayspring Mountain, because Han Li had unexpectedly made it into the twenty-four finalists, Mu Peiling had made a trip to the medicine garden and gave Han Li a long explanation on the intricacies of the Profound Ice Arts. This surprising action had left Han Li at a loss for words.

Apart from those two times, no one else disturbed Han Li during his cultivation.

One day as Han Li was strenuously cultivating the Azure Essence Sword Arts, he abruptly frowned and stood up. By the time he left his cave residence and entered the medicinal garden, a voice transmission talisman knocked against the medicine garden's restrictions.

When Han Li saw this, he opened the garden's restrictions and waved his arm. A moment later, the sound transmission talisman flew into his hand in a streak of fire and soon disappeared.

Han Li expressionlessly muttered, "White Phoenix Mountain's Martial Ancestor Song. Isn't that the number one beauty in the Drifting Cloud Sect? Will that woman be instructing me? If that's the case, these coming days shouldn't be too boring!" He then

released a flying sword magic tool and directly flew in the direction of White Phoenix Mountain.

White Phoenix Mountain was at the eastmost side of Drifting Cloud Sect and was particularly distant from the other five mountains as if it were standing proudly in solitude. Although this mountain was the shortest of the Six Marvelous Mountains, it was by far the most verdant and beautiful.

Not long after leaving the garden, Han Li appeared near White Phoenix Mountain.

Because this mountain was made up of mostly female cultivators, White Phoenix Mountain had a few strange rules. Ordinarily, any male cultivators arriving at the mountain were required to land at the base of the mountain and receive permission to enter. Otherwise, they would only have themselves to blame for falling into White Phoenix Mountain's restrictions.

Naturally, Han Li had no intention of forcing his way through and obediently landed at the base of the mountain.

There were currently three Qi Condensation female cultivators at the mountain gate happily chatting. When they saw Han Li drop down, they couldn't help but curiously examine the unfamiliar male cultivator.

Han Li saluted the three female disciples and said, "I am Dayspring Mountain's Han Li. I've come to accept cultivation guidance from Martial Ancestor Song. I hope Senior Martial Sisters can make a report."

A young, freckled female cultivator smiled and promptly said, "So you're Han Li. The Martial Ancestor has already notified us of you. Junior Martial Brother Han may directly head to the Phoenix Court Pavilion at the top of the mountain. Martial Ancestor is waiting for you there."

Han Li uttered a word of thanks before immediately flying up the

mountain.

However, not long after he departed, the three female disciples began to gossip without restraint once they believed Han Li was out of earshot.

“Is Junior Martial Brother Han truly a disciple that will be participating in the Sword Trial Assembly? His cultivation doesn’t seem very high.”

“He doesn’t appear to be anything special.”

“Hehe! So you two don’t know. I’ve seen all of Junior Martial Brother Han’s fights. Let me tell you...”

Having heard all of that, Han Li recalled his spiritual sense with a wry smile. After shaking his head, he fly towards the mountain peak.

White Phoenix Mountain wasn’t very tall. After only a moment, Han Li managed to reach the top of the mountain, a flat plateau that spanned three hundred meters. It was surrounded with white clouds with abundant spiritual Qi as if it were an otherworldly realm.

Within this fantastic scene stood a sole pavilion that was only sixty meters tall and was divided into three stories. The building was constructed from a unknown white wood. Its natural untouched form produced an air of simple elegance.

Han Li landed in front of the pavilion and loudly shouted, “Disciple Han Li pays his respects to Martial Ancestor Song!” Once that was said, Han Li felt a trace of spiritual sense sweep over him. He stood in place with a calm expression, feigning ignorance of the matter.

A long while later, a woman’s gentle voice said, “Since you’ve arrived, come up to the second story of the pavilion. I’ll be waiting for you there.”

“As you bid!” Han Li then walked forward and gently pushed

open the wooden doors which swung freely.

The first floor of the pavilion was completely empty apart from a spell formation to aid in cultivation.

Han Li swept his gaze past the first floor and directly headed towards the second floor.

The second floor was also quite bare. Apart from a few racks of jade slips and magic tools, there were only a few chairs and a short stone table.

Han Li also saw a blue-clothed woman sitting in one of the chairs. She was looking at a worn jade slip on the table as if she were attentively reading through it.

After a moment of hesitation, Han Li thought to say something when the woman raised her head, revealing a heart stirring beauty. She appeared to be in her mid twenties and was an early Core Formation cultivator.

“You’re Han Li?” The woman calmly asked.

“Yes, Martial Ancestor!” Han Li respectfully replied.

She stared at Han Li with her bright, clear eyes and said, “Since you were able to come here, then it can be considered fate. I will instruct you as best I can. However, you will only remain at the Phoenix Court Pavilion for three days before you depart. What you will learn during this time will depend on yourself.”

For some reason, although her cultivation wasn’t very high, Han Li felt as if both his body and mind were clearly revealed underneath her gaze, and he couldn’t help but feel alarm. Given Han Li’s immense spiritual sense, it was extremely strange for him to experience this sensation. Clearly, she had used some sort of mind reading divine ability.

Without any further thought, Han Li gave her a polite reply as he stealthily circulated the entirety of his Great Development Technique throughout his body, shielding his true thoughts.

As Han Li became inwardly alarmed and vigilant, a strange expression appeared in the blue-clothed woman's eyes before closing them with a tired expression.

The woman gently said, "First, recite the chant for your cultivation art and then head down to the second layer. Do not come back up without my command. After I've obtained some enlightenment of your cultivation art, I will give you a detailed explanation on any of its intricacies. Now, start!"

"Yes. Disciple cultivates the technique that Martial Aunt Mu had given him, the Profound Ice Arts. This cultivation art..." Han Li began to slowly recite it with a calm expression.

After the time it took to finish a cup of tea, Han Li had finished. The woman nodded her head and waved an arm, indicating for him to go down. Han Li saluted her and wordlessly climbed down the stairs.

The blue-clothed woman looked at Han Li's departing figure and motionlessly sat down in her chair with a frown.

She then took out a sound transmission talisman and calmly said a few words into it. It turned into a streak of fire and flew out the window without a trace.

...

At the center of the main mountain of the Drifting Cloud Sect where the Core Formation cultivators had last met, a white-haired old man was leisurely standing at the window when his eyes suddenly began to shine as a streak of fiery light flew towards him from across the sky.

The old man wordlessly raised his hand and emitted a mist of white light, catching the fiery light. It fiercely burned, releasing the curt voice of the blue-clothed woman, "Han Li passes, but Du Dong harbors malice."

With an icy expression, old man coldly muttered, "Humph!"

Habors malice? I knew something was amiss. The Du Clan had a deep relationship with the Hundred Possibilities Pavilion's Fu Clan. If he truly was a descendant of the Du Clan, he should've entered the Hundred Possibilities Pavilion rather than our Drifting Cloud Sect."

The white-haired old man thought a moment more before muttering to himself with an expression of admiration, "However, Junior Martial Sister Song's Harmonic Mind is becoming truly fearsome. I myself am uncertain as to whether or not I can block it. I know only my two Martial Uncles to be capable."

...

Two months later, at the western portion of the Dreamcloud Mountains in a deep valley surrounded by mountains, there were several thousands of Hundred Possibilities Pavilion disciples converging at the heart of the valley. They were excitedly talking with each other as their clamor filled the air.

There were many disciples that repeatedly gazed to the skies with impatient expressions as if they were feeling anxious.

Chapter 627: Sword Trial Battles (1)

At the very front of the several thousands of disciples in the plaza, there stood several tens of rather noteworthy individuals. Eight of them were Core Formation cultivators who stood with calm poise, with several tens of Foundation Establishment cultivators standing behind them. They were the Hundred Possibilities Sect's institute masters and elders, but a majority of them were merely stewards.

"They're coming!" A sharp-eyed disciple saw something off the horizon and shouted in excitement. Suddenly, many low grade cultivators began to look expectantly up at the sky, catching glimpses of light in the distance. Soon, a large group of variously colored dots of light began to fly towards them.

"It's the Ancient Sword Sect. They're all using sword magic tools."

As soon as that was said, the crowd began to roil. Many of them began to point to the incoming lights with varied expressions.

"Silence! Do you wish to make a joke of us to the other two sects?" A tall old man coldly uttered with a sullen expression. His voice resonated to everyone present and caused a few of the overeager disciples to shut their mouths, bringing silence to the plaza in an instant.

When the tall old man saw this, his expression relaxed and the other Core Formation cultivators glanced at one another with a smile. They didn't seem surprised at all by this.

At that moment, the Ancient Sword Sect cultivators arrived at the plaza. A vast majority of them had flown on swords with hardly any exceptions.

A short and small old man flew out from Ancient Sword Sect cultivators and descended with a chuckle. "I didn't expect that

Brother Fu would personally come to greet us. I am truly overwhelmed by your grace!”

A blue-robed scholarly man and a white-clothed young woman both descended at his side with a faint smile. From their appearance, they appeared to be married.

At that moment, the Ancient Sword Sect’s young, low-grade cultivators each began to descend onto the plaza.

The tall old man calmly saluted the three and said, “So it is Brother Jiang Yun who is bringing the disciples this time. We extend a respectful greeting to you. And there is also the famous Bai Bi Swordmates, we welcome you as well.”

“Enough, let’s not flatter each other or we’ll make a laughingstock of ourselves in front of our juniors. However, it seems that the Drifting Cloud Sect has yet to arrive. They’ve become increasingly disinterested in the Sword Trial Assembly. Don’t tell me they’ve grown cowardly because they’ve placed last a few times?” The cultivator surnamed Jiang seemed to dislike the Drifting Cloud Sect and spoke with a trace of schadenfreude.

The old man surnamed Fu wore a wry smile, not daring to rashly reply. The Hundred Possibilities Pavilion differed from the Ancient Sword Sect. If such words left his mouth and they managed to reach the upper echelon of the Drifting Cloud Sect, they would certainly cause trouble.

But before Old Man Fu thought of how he should reply, a middle-aged man with long dark-green robes grinned and interrupted him from behind, “There is no need for Fellow Daoist Jiang to be so impatient. I’ve heard that White Phoenix Mountain’s Fairy Song is escorting the Drifting Cloud Sect disciples this time around. She is a fine beauty that is rarely seen in our three sects. It is a pity that Fairy Song has always kept herself hidden away. Now, we finally have a chance to look upon her!”

Jiang Yun wore a face of excitement and nodded his head,

“Brother Shi mentioned the Fairy of White Phoenix? I’ve long heard rumors that this woman’s beauty is incomparable. If this woman is truly escorting their disciples, then there is no harm in waiting.”

When the Ancient Sword Sect pair cultivators heard this, they wore a surprised expression. The azure-robed scholarly man astonishedly said, “I’ve heard the Fairy of White Phoenix possesses Heavenly Spiritual Roots, and that she was able to easily enter Core Formation in less than a hundred years. She could be said to be a cultivation genius that is only spotted once in a thousand years. It is quite surprising that we’d be able to see such a figure at the Sword Trial Assembly!”

Although the white-robed woman’s expression was calm, she spoke with an enchanting voice, “That’s true! Even as a woman, I hold quite some curiosity towards the greatly renowned Fairy Song. I have yet to catch sight of her. Surely she must be wondrously beautiful!”

Old Man Fu smiled and thought to say something when he suddenly shouted towards the sky, “Huh!? It seems the Drifting Cloud Sect members have arrived!”

When the others heard this, they gazed upward and saw that a huge black dot was gradually growing closer to them from the east.

“That’s...” Jiang Yun’s expression stirred. It seemed he knew what it was.

Once it grew closer, the others were able to clearly see what it was – a huge, monstrous bird that was flying towards them with astonishing speed. There seemed to be many cultivators standing on the bird’s back.

Upon spotting the huge bird, Jiang Yun sourly said, “Humph! The Drifting Cloud Sect is merely showing off its mutated Azure Hawk. The only thing impressive about it that has mutated is its size. It is still only a grade five demon beast!”

Old Man Fu and the other Hundred Possibilities Pavilion cultivators pretended to have not heard this. However, the youths nearby gasped at the sight of such a large spirit beast. They all stared at the huge bird's astonishing figure with awe.

Each flap of its glowing azure wings brought it forward with astonishing momentum, and in the blink of an eye, it had arrived in front of the plaza. Its huge wings cast a shadow upon the entire stage and blew fierce winds downward, causing a few of the low grade disciples to lose their balance and turn pale from fright.

“Stop!” A man’s voice suddenly sounded out from atop the bird. The huge bird folded its wings and floated motionlessly in the air as many cultivators began to drop down from its back.

“Yi! Isn’t that Firecloud Mountain’s Brother Duan? What a pleasant surprise!” When Old Man Fu saw the red-robed old man in the front, his eyes brightened and he hastily went forward to meet him.

The old man chuckled and smiled, “Hardly. I’ve held quite the impression of you ever since I last saw you in the Yun Province!” At the same time he was speaking, he swept his gaze past the many people behind him.

Old Man Fu casually said, “Brother Duan wishes to look for Chang Zhen? That’s too bad. Junior Martial Brother Chang is currently handling affairs outside of the sect. However, he should return by the end of the assembly!”

The red-robed old man appeared slightly disappointed, but his expression soon recovered. “So it’s like that. It can’t be helped. Being able to talk about old times is quite a problem of chance. Back to the matter at hand then! This is Junior Martial Brother Yu. There should be no need for introductions, as everyone should recognize him. As for Junior Martial Sister Song, I believe this should be everyone’s first time seeing her. Let me introduce you!” He pointed to the stunning blue-clothed woman behind him.

Old Man Fu looked at Cultivator Song with narrowed eyes and gasped. “I’ve known of your grand reputation for many years as the Fairy of White Phoenix! Now that I’ve witnessed your elegance, I must say that your reputation is well deserved!”

The blue-clothed woman gently smiled and replied, “Senior Martial Brother Fu wrongfully flatters me. I hardly deserve the title of Fairy!” The woman had an aura of peaceful charm to her, causing the nearby low grade male cultivators to look on with thumping hearts. Although a few of the high grade cultivators were better off than their bewitched juniors, passion flared within their eyes as well.

Next, the Drifting Cloud Sect’s Core Formation cultivators greeted the Ancient Sword Sect.

Although Jiang Yun appeared indifferent, he reluctantly uttered a few words. As for the white-robed young woman, she stuck close to Cultivator Song and began to enthusiastically speak with her as if they were sisters.

Despite this, Cultivator Song maintained an elegant demeanor throughout, revealing not the slightest flaw in her actions.

The following matters were simple enough. Once the Hundred Possibilities Pavilion finished their formalities, they brought the two sects to their respective huge courtyards and had them rest for the day. The official competition would begin on the next morning.

The night peacefully passed by. With the coming of the second day, the three sects fiercely began the competition.

The competition was conducted in three groups of thirty with each sect sending ten of their own disciples into each group. Each group would then battle among themselves in a single elimination format until only four were left. The final twelve disciples would then draw ballots and fight for the top ten rankings.

Because there weren't many disciples competing, there was no need to have multiple fights occurring at the same time. The fights were to be held sequentially on the same stage. As for how the order was decided, there were lots that were drawn by each of the group's leaders. As for the judges, they would come from the sect that didn't belong to either of the competitors, making it quite fair.

With countless Hundred Possibilities Pavilion disciples densely surrounding the stage, a bald man stood at the center of the stage and slowly announced, "The first fight is between the Drifting Cloud Sect's Han Li vs the Ancient Sword Sect's Yao Feng!"

Following the bald man's announcement, a disciple walked out from each group of disciples. A torrent of whispers began to pour from the surrounding Hundred Possibilities Pavilion disciples once they clearly saw the contestants.

"Am I not mistaken? One is a Qi Condensation cultivator at the eleventh layer and the other is a Foundation Establishment cultivator!"

"The difference in their cultivation is far too great!"

The Ancient Sword Sect cultivator looked at his opponent with a strange expression. Soon after, disdain momentarily appeared on his face. He felt it would be extremely easy to deal with an opponent with such shallow cultivation.

As for his opponent, he was a youth with a common appearance that was tightly frowning as if he felt perplexed and anxious.

Of course, the Core Formation cultivators of the three sects were separated from the rest of the disciples. They were floating in empty space above the light barrier and leisurely chatting.

"Brother Duan, does the Drifting Cloud Sect truly plan on abandoning this Sword Trial Assembly? How was an eleventh layer disciple able to prevail through the selections? Was he

someone you brought to make up for a lack of numbers?” Jiang Yun couldn’t help but laugh upon seeing the Drifting Cloud Sect disciple.

The red-robed cultivator calmly replied, “Huh, eleventh layer? Not bad! I recall that he was only at the tenth layer when he acquired victory in the selections. It is quite impressive for him to have cultivated so quickly!”

Jiang Yun wore a doubtful expression. “What? He made it through the selection at tenth layer? Are you joking?”

This time, the red-robed cultivator merely replied with a silent smile.

When Jiang Yun saw this, he felt slightly apprehensive and said nothing else. He began to pay attention to the stage below.

“Match start!” The bald man from before suddenly shouted.

As soon as the Ancient Sword Sect youth heard this, he had a red and a blue sword fly out from the sheathes on his back. They floated above him as green light flickered from his hands, forming a green light barrier around him. Afterwards, the youth quickly formed a hand incantation, intending to have his flying swords attack.

But before he could carry out this well-practiced series of actions, he suddenly spotted sixty fireballs heading towards him in an overbearing wave of blistering heat.

“Ah!” The youth loudly shouted in alarm and his face became deathly pale.

However, he was someone who had experienced many battles and quickly regained his composure. He gave up on using his flying swords to attack and immediately fell to the ground, dropping the light barrier around him. In that same moment, he felt his body covered in cold sweat, but he soon felt a furious rage overwhelm him as the wave of fireballs brush past his head. Wishing to make a

show of Han Li in revenge, he was about to jump up when a black leg blurred in front of him, relentlessly stomping down on his head. Suddenly, the world around him turned black.

Chapter 628: Sword Trial Battles (2)

The crowd outside the light barrier roared in amazement.

Even the bald judge gazed at the youth with an odd expression. After a short moment, he loudly announced, “The Drifting Cloud Sect’s Han Li is victorious!”

Han Li bowed to the judge with a calm expression and walked out of the light barrier.

Soon after, two Ancient Sword Sect disciples rushed onto the stage and carried off their unconscious sect member.

The short old man surnamed Jiang stared at the stage in disbelief and then grimaced.

Although he knew there would be a few unorthodox tactics in a competition between low grade disciples, he absolutely didn’t expect talismans to be used in such a manner. He had teased the red-robed old man earlier because he held high hopes for this disciple, but he didn’t expect for it to backfire. A moment later, an embarrassed expression appeared on the man’s face and he gloomily keep silent.

Old Man Fu couldn’t help but chuckle at the sight of Han Li’s battle, “Brother Duan, that disciple of yours is truly quite interesting. He used up many spirit stones worth of talismans. Although it was quite the trick, it must’ve taken quite a bit of practice in order to simultaneously use so many fireball talismans at once. Ordinary disciples would find it quite difficult to do.”

The red-robed old man was immensely pleased with the Ancient Sword Sect’s Jiang Yun’s deflated appearance, but he played down the victory with half-truths, “It’s nothing! This disciple of ours is a talisman refinement expert. Attacking with talismans should come naturally to him. However, even I am somewhat surprised for him to use so many talisman at once.”

Jiang Yun resentfully muttered, “Humph! He’s only capable of using many talismans at once. Now, the others will know of his tricks. In the later rounds, this disciple of yours will definitely be defeated.”

The red-robed old man chuckled and said, “Is that so?”

The azure-robed scholarly man glanced at Han Li down below and casually nodded his head, “However, I think that this disciple’s movement techniques is a body lightening technique from the mortal world. How else would he have so quickly caught Martial Nephew Yao off guard?”

“Fellow Daoist Bai has seen through it as well! This disciple of ours was once a vagrant cultivator and has learned many mixed techniques. It is very much our sect’s embarrassment!”

The scholarly man smiled and said, “Not at all. Long ago, I also held somewhat of an interest in mortal martial arts and studied them a bit. Although these martial arts have no use to high grade cultivators, in the hands of a skillful Qi Condensation cultivator they will greatly add to their might. Furthermore, this disciple of yours seem extremely practiced in his techniques as if he has experienced many battles. It isn’t unfair for our own disciple to have lost against him.”

As the three sects’ experts calmly continued their discussion, the bald referee from the Hundred Possibilities Pavilion was replaced by an old man from the Drifting Cloud Sect. He expressionlessly said, “The second fight will be the Hundred Possibilities Pavilion’s Tian Ci versus the Ancient Sword Sect’s Zhou Xu.”

Soon after, a youth from each sect walked onto the stage and bowed to each other. Once the old man announced the start of the battle, they each formed incantation gestures and began to use their magic tools.

The three sects’ Core Formation cultivators soon placed the previous fight in the back of their minds and began to watch this

new battle unfold.

Perhaps due to the incisiveness of Han Li's previous fight, the current careful and deliberate battle caused boredom in the spectators.

Eventually, the Ancient Sword Sect disciple was able to use his sword magic tool to break the opponent's defenses and claim victory.

Each fight then successively continued until the first round of the competition was concluded two days later.

The Ancient Sword Sect cultivators' strength was as great as their reputation described.

Apart from Han Li and a few others, the majority of the rounds had been dominated by Ancient Sword Sect disciples.

This scene was cause for great joy for Jiang Yun and he wore a wide grin, releasing him from his previous gloom.

Of course, the Hundred Possibilities Pavilion and the Drifting Cloud Sect cultivators had already anticipated this outcome. Although they found this somewhat embarrassing, they didn't show it on their faces and pretended not to care. From their bearing, it appeared as if they were on the winning side.

During the second round of the competition, Han Li's opponent was a Hundred Possibilities Pavilion female Qi Condensation cultivator with a valiant appearance.

After seeing that she was facing Han Li, she immediately took to the air on her magic tool as soon as the match started.

According to her understanding, she would be able to dodge any of Han Li's talisman attacks in the air and would also be safe from his swift movement techniques.

Han Li sighed upon seeing this and tossed out a stack of fireball talismans without a word.

Just as the woman thought to dodge the incoming fireballs, Han Li formed an incantation gesture with both his hands and caused the approaching fireballs to flash with a red light. The barrage of fireballs turned into small flock of fire birds that spiralled around without approaching her.

When she saw this, she was greatly frightened and thought to use her magic tool to protect herself. However, Han Li wasn't about to give her the opportunity. He muttered an incantation in a superficial display and commanded the flame birds with his spiritual sense. The flock of fire birds then flew towards the woman and struck her from all sides.

Although the woman managed to envelope herself in a water attribute barrier through a talisman, it was incapable of enduring such a fierce attack. In a mere moment, the barrier shattered.

Helpless, the young woman could only take the initiative to concede defeat.

After that battle, the disciples of the other two sects were greatly moved, having previously believed that Han Li merely abused his abundance of talismans without any skill.

However, a few Foundation Establishment cultivators that possessed powerful magic tools merely viewed Han Li's flashy actions with disdain. But in the end...

...

There was an obscure, desolate valley at the center of the Dreamcloud Mountains. This valley had long been enveloped with waves of Yin mist over countless years. It was dark to the point where one couldn't even see their own hands if they entered it. Additionally, all sorts of venomous serpents and insects entrenched themselves within the mist in countless numbers. And due to the valley's small size, they were easily overlooked by any cultivators that passed it by.

But one day, the valley's mist became denser than usual, but the mist at the deepest depths of the valley was particularly chaotic.

In a flash of white light, two figures suddenly emerged beside a mysterious pile of rocks.

One of these figures was a man who wore grey robes and had fierce expression. The other was a scholarly man with azure robes and a jade belt.

Although there was clearly no one besides the rock pile, a man's hoarse voice lazily said, "Well if it isn't the Ancient Sword Sect's Brother Bai and the Drifting Cloud Sect's Fellow Daoist Yu? Could it be that the Sword Trial Assembly has already ended?"

"So Brother Yu is on duty today! Yes, the assembly has already ended. We've come to see whether or not the Brightsight Water has been prepared. If it is ready, then we'll directly transport the ten disciples here to prevent anything unexpected from occurring."

As for the grey-clothed old man at his side, he remained silent with an indifferent expression.

The previous man's voice spoke with objection, "Something unexpected? This place is guarded by three Core Formation cultivators at all times. Why not bring the low grade cultivators along with you? Are you afraid that they'll bring some trouble?"

Cultivator Bai shook his head and said, "The Spirit Well Tree is an immensely important matter. It is better to be careful! Besides, dropping the Wine Nectar into the Brightsight water is the most crucial step. Once this is done, the spirit water must immediately be used to cleanse their eyes, otherwise its efficacy would greatly decrease. Why else would we be required to bring the ten disciples over here!"

The man chuckled and confidently said, "Alright, the Brightsight Water has already been prepared. When they've cleansed their eyes, have them immediately depart. Since this area is heavily

covered with restrictions, if you teleport them here they won't know where this place is."

Cultivator Bai nodded his head and said, "That would be for the best. Brother Yu, stay behind for the time being. I will notify our Fellow Daoists and have them teleport the disciples over."

The man's voice suddenly thought of something and asked, "Ah yes, I suppose the winner of the Sword Trial Assembly from your Ancient Sword Sect?"

The azure robed scholar smiled and said, "I'm afraid I must indeed disappoint you. The winner of this Sword Trial Assembly is our Ancient Sword Sect's Martial Nephew Meng Di."

The man's lazy voice revealed a trace of satisfaction, "Humph! It isn't surprising that the Foundation Establishment cultivators of your Ancient Sword Sect are stronger than ours. However, when one reaches Core Formation stage, it's hard to say who is weaker or stronger. If there is an opportunity, bring over that Senior Martial Brother San of yours. I wish to compare notes with him sometime."

The scholarly man grew silent for a moment and casually smiled, "It seems Brother Yue still broods over his defeat by Senior Martial Brother San long ago. However, I fear I must disappoint Brother Yue. Senior Martial Brother San has already entered seclusion in an attempt to breakthrough to late Core Formation stage."

Chapter 629: The Restricted Area

“He’s going into seclusion to reach late Core Formation stage?” The man was clearly surprised, but he soon sighed and spoke no further.

The Ancient Sword Sect’s Cultivator Bai then wordlessly raised his hand and struck the pile of rocks nearby with a streak of white light. The pile of rocks suddenly flashed with light and he disappeared. The pile of rocks was clearly a well hidden transportation spell formation.

After seeing the grey-clothed old man depart, he sat down on the ground nearby.

At the other end of the transportation formation was a small stone room in the Hundred Possibilities Sect. The scholarly man appeared within the formation with a flash of white light. Several high grade cultivators from the three sects were surrounding him.

Cultivator Jian asked, “How is it Junior Martial Brother? Are the preparations finished?”

The scholarly man replied, “Senior Martial Brother, relax. Everything is ready at the sacred site. We may take them in now.”

The old man surnamed Fu nodded his head with satisfaction, “Good! Then we must trouble Brother Duan to bring the ten juniors over here.” As soon as he finished the red-robed old man wordlessly pushed open the door and left. Old Man Fu continued, “As arranged, our three sects will each send a Core Formation cultivator to accompany them. The Drifting Cloud Sect’s Fellow Daoist Yu is already on the other side. Brother Jiang, who will you be sending over?”

Jiang Yun casually replied, “I’ve already seen it once before and there is little to see, how about Junior Martial Brother Bai goes?”

Old Man Fu smiled and said, “That’s fine. Although Fellow Daoist

Bai hasn't had his turn guarding the sacred site, he was once one of the ten finalists in the Sword Trial Assembly. It could be considered revisiting a memory."

Cultivator Bai nodded his head with a calm expression but said nothing. The white-clothed young woman charmingly smiled at him and rubbed shoulders with him in a rather romantic manner.

At that moment, footsteps came from outside of the stone room and the red-robed old man walked in with a calm expression, leading the ten finalists.

Although the Drifting Cloud Sect hadn't acquired first place, there were four disciples that managed to make it into the final ten. Occupying the most places amongst the three sects. This had caused Old Man Duan to feel quite pleased in contrast to his calm exterior.

With that thought, he unconsciously swept his gaze over the four disciples. There was the Firecloud Mountain's Sun Huo, a staunch-faced youth, Mu Peiling of Dayspring Mountain, Han Li and Du Dong.

When he caught sight of Du Dong, Old Man Duan couldn't help but inwardly snort, and a trace of derision momentarily appeared within his heart.

As for the disciple that had acquired first place, he was a black-clothed youth with an expression as clear as a drawn sword. He was the Ancient Sword Sect's Meng Di, who possessed the Ninesword Spirit Constitution.

The "Ninesword Spirit Constitution" was among the three great sword bodies in the cultivation world. It wasn't something to take lightly. With a top-grade sword magic tool in hand, there were no opponents in the competition that were capable of withstanding his strikes. In only a few short moments, he was able to crush any opposition that stood in his way en route to first place.

Having thought that, the red-robed old man felt somewhat envious of the Ancient Sword Sect's good luck.

Han Li indifferently glanced at the Core Formation "Masters" in the room. He felt neither joy nor alarm.

After his victory in the third round, he had deliberately lost to a skilled Hundred Possibilities Pavilion Foundation Establishment disciple. He then participated in a battle against the six who lost for the final four positions in the top ten. In the end, he had nearly spent all of his talismans to forcefully enter ninth place.

As for Du Dong, perhaps having held the same plan in mind as Han Li, he had also suffered a defeat at the fourth round and then deliberately suffered a loss against him, landing him in tenth place. Those actions had left Han Li dumbstruck.

As for the top ranked disciple amongst the Drifting Cloud Sect disciples, that would be the youth named Sun Huo. His cultivation was quite strong and he managed to land in third place.

But from how Han Li saw it, apart from the black-clothed youth whose techniques greatly matched his magic tool, he would be able to defeat all the others using his previous methods.

Once the assembly concluded, the top ten disciples each received a top grade magic tool. As for Meng Di, he also received a jade box that contained a Spirit Tempering Pill.

When Han Li saw the jade box, he instantly grew determined, 'If this goes smoothly, and I'm able to acquire the root of the Spirit Well Tree as well as the pill formula, it'll be over. If that isn't possible, I'll take the pill from the hands of that Ancient Sword Sect disciple. After all, that pill will greatly aid in condensing a Nascent Soul.'

As Han Li thought this, Old Man Fu began to teleport the gathered disciples.

The three sects' youths already knew where they were going and

wore cheerful smiles.

As white light flashed, Cultivator Bai and a middle-aged cultivator from the Hundred Possibilities Pavilion teleported alongside them.

Han Li and company were left dazed from the teleportation and found themselves amidst a dense fog and a pile of rocks.

Han Li narrowed his eyes and unconsciously swept his spiritual sense past the area. However, once it extended out a hundred meters, he immediately felt a restriction block his path. His heart trembled at the discovery. Knowing that there were powerful spell formations in place, he decided that stealthily completing his objective would be best.

Seeing that they had all arrived, the grey-clothed old man calmly stood up and raised his hand, shooting out a yellow spell seal into the dense mist.

The surrounding mist began to roil and suddenly dispersed. Not far ahead of them was a wall overgrown with dense moss as if no one had ever passed it by.

Cultivator Bai warned the ten finalists with an icy tone, "Listen well. You must cleanse your eyes as soon as the spirit water is refined. You are allowed to enter the restricted area for that reason alone. Normally, even we are not allowed near this place. After you enter, you are only allowed to stay here for the day, and must immediately depart on the next. This place is also heavily clad in restrictions. Absolutely do not roam this place as you please, else you will be subjected to the entirety of the consequences."

The disciples naturally acknowledged his words.

At that moment, a man's voice was heard from the direction of the stone wall, "Alright, if you have anything else to say, leave it until after you enter. I am going to open a way through the great formation."

When the man surnamed Yue said this, the stone wall rippled throughout the air and disappeared in flash of green light.

A moment later, the disciples were left astonished as the stone wall disappeared before them and was replaced with huge, tightly-shut stone gates.

The stone gate was densely covered in talisman characters and pulsing with rainbow light. It was unknown just how powerful this restriction was. There were also several barriers of yellow light surrounding the gate.

At that moment, a yellow-clothed cultivator with his arms behind his back was standing outside the thirty-meter-tall gate. He appeared to be in his forties, and he had thick, slanted eyebrows that gave him a fierce appearance. If an ordinary person were to see him, they would grow fearful and wouldn't dare to meet his gaze.

When the middle-aged cultivator from the Hundred Possibilities Pavilion saw his fearsome appearance, he revealed trace of admiration. "Hehe! Senior Martial Brother Yue seems to have made much progress in his Ghost Fiend Arts. It seems cultivating near the sacred tree has made cultivation far easier."

Although his words weren't loud, they had clearly reached Cultivator Yue's ears. The yellow-clothed cultivator immediately rolled his eyes and snorted, "If you're willing to be confined to this place for sixty years, you can diligently cultivate as well. Though I wonder if Junior Martial Brother Pai would be able to endure it, given his temperament."

The middle-aged Hundred Possibilities Pavilion cultivator wore an embarrassed expression and said, "I was merely speaking without consideration. It must be extremely difficult for Senior Martial Brothers Yue, Wu, and Tian to stand guard here. My words..."

"Enough! No need to speak any further. These restrictions are

something that our Nascent Soul Martial Uncles placed down. I will only be able to open the restrictions for a short amount of time. Hurry up!”

The yellow-clothed cultivator then slapped his hands together and summoned a yellow command medallion. He then began to chant with a solemn expression.

The command medallion suddenly glowed with a grand yellow light and began to radiate nearby, melting away the light barriers in an instant, revealing a ten meter wide passage.

“Everyone go! Be quick!” The scholarly man urged them as soon as he saw this and took the lead, flying forward in a streak of white light.

The other two Core Formation cultivators gave similar commands and shot forward as well.

When Han Li and company saw this, they hastily followed after them on their magic tools.

Chapter 630: A Boy

As soon as the party arrived before the stone gate, the yellow-clothed cultivator's command medallion dimmed and the passageway completely disappeared.

Facing the group, he indifferently commanded, "Follow." He turned around and began to form various hand incantations with his fingers. He then raised his arms and shot out a scarlet and a yellow radiance from his hands towards the huge stone gate.

Suddenly, talisman characters on the tightly-shut stone gate began to stir and the stone gate began to release a series of low-hums. The gate slowly opened to reveal a long passageway.

The yellow-clothed cultivator wordlessly stepped through and the others glanced at each other before closely following after him.

Han Li stood at the center of the disciples and was staring forward with great intensity. But in actuality, he was sweeping his spiritual sense across everything nearby.

This rectangular passageway was a man-made tunnel into the heart of the mountain. Not only were the walls smooth, but there would always be a few profound talisman characters every couple of steps. Although Han Li couldn't study them for the time being, he was certain they weren't there only for decoration.

The passageway couldn't have been considered long. After walking for only about three hundred meters, their surroundings brightened and they soon arrived at a tidy stone hall that was about two hundred meters wide and eighty meters tall.

The center of the stone hall had a meter tall limestone platform. There were ten lines perpendicularly crossing from each side. From the sets of black and white pieces arranged on the platform, it appeared to be a chess game during a most crucial moment.

There was an old man and a young boy that were sitting cross

legged from each other on the platform. The old man appeared in his late fifties while the young boy appeared to be less than ten years old. From his flawless appearance, it appeared as if this were a perfect child that had reincarnated.

“Martial Uncle Lan! What is Senior doing here?” When Cultivator Bai saw the child, he suddenly shouted out in surprise. He then hastily saluted him.

“Martial Uncle Lan?”

The grey-robed old man and the Hundred Possibilities Pavilion cultivator were initially surprised to see the child there. But after hearing Cultivator Bai address him by name, their expressions greatly changed. Once they saw the boy’s ponytail, bare feet, and golden band on his arm, they suddenly recalled the name of a legendary Senior.

“Juniors Du Bei and Yu Shan’an pays their respects to Senior Lan!” In their alarm, the two rushed to salute him.

“Stand. Didn’t you notice that I am at a crucial point in the game with Martial Nephew Hu? Let’s talk after I’ve finished my game.” The boy’s voice was as young as his appearance, but each of his words carried an aged tone filled with poise.

“As you bid!” Cultivator Bai and the other two Core Formation cultivators instantly acknowledged him and silently loitered nearby, not daring to appear sullen in the slightest.

As for the old man playing chess with the boy, he wryly smiled at the three but remained silent. As for the yellow-robed cultivator, he respectfully stood behind the boy as if he were differentially waiting upon him.

When the young cultivators heard their three martial ancestors suddenly call out to the boy as Martial Uncle, they became restless. They instantly realized what this had meant and they all stared at the boy with anxious hearts.

In the instant Han Li saw the boy, he felt his heart drop. This was a genuine early Nascent Soul cultivator. Why did he appear here?

However, he soon recovered his calm. While he wasn't currently an opponent for an early Nascent Soul cultivator, it wouldn't be any problem for him to escape from him. Additionally, he was confident that the Nascent Soul cultivator wasn't here for him.

With that in mind, Han Li began to plan for any contingencies that may occur.

In the end, the boy and the Old Man played for a quarter hour more before the old man stepped back from the chessboard and respectfully said, "Senior Lan's chess skills are excellent. This disciple concedes defeat!"

A trace of happiness appeared on the boy's face, but his gaze soon turned and he doubtfully said, "Martial Nephew Hu, you didn't deliberately lose to me, right? We agreed that you wouldn't hold back against me."

When the old man heard this, his face appeared to have grown longer and he hurriedly said, "Junior wouldn't dare to deceive Senior. It is just that Senior's chess skills have made massive improvements."

The boy smiled and said, "Hehe, I also feel that my chess skills have made quite the improvement from before. It seems that it was quite worth it to practice against those mortal chess masters."

The boy's smile then faded away as he changed the topic, "Alright, let's put the chess pieces away. There is business to attend to."

He turned around to face the cultivators that were waiting on him. After sweeping his gaze past the Core Formation cultivators, his gaze dropped onto the scholarly man's face.

The boy leisurely asked, "Martial Nephew Bai, how many years has it been since you've entered the Ancient Sword Sect?"

Cultivator Bai's face revealed slight puzzlement, but he sincerely answered, "This Junior entered the sect over a hundred years ago."

A strange expression flickered from the boy's eyes and he sighed, "A hundred years! It must've been quite tough for you."

The scholarly man's expression changed and he forced a smile, "Martial Uncle, what do you mean?"

The boy stared at the scholarly man and he said with an icy tone, "What do I mean? As the succeeding disciple of the Righteous Dao's Overwhelming Pavilion Sect Master, your esteemed self has maintained you cover in the Ancient Sword Sect for quite the while. Haven't you had any thoughts of visiting your master?"

When Cultivator Bai heard the boy, his complexion instantly paled.

The other two Core Formation cultivators revealed shock from their eyes and unconsciously took several steps back from Cultivator Bai.

"Fellow Daoist Bai, is Senior Lan speaking the truth?" The middle-aged cultivator asked with disbelief.

Cultivator Bai's face fluctuated between red and white, unable to give an excuse. After wearing an unsightly expression, the scholarly man said, "Since Martial Uncle has already fully investigated me, there is no use in denying this. However, I will not wait by and idly allow myself to be captured!"

As soon as he said that last word, his body flashed with white light and he shot towards the disciples behind him. His glowing white hand was reaching out towards the black-clothed youth Meng Di who possessed the Ninesword Spirit Constitution!

"What are you doing?!" The two Core Formation cultivators furiously shouted. Their bodies flickered with radiance and they moved to rescue Meng Di, but they were clearly too late.

However, Meng Di managed to react in his alarm, and he raised his hand to fiercely release a dense strike of sword Qi.

Unfortunately, there was too great a difference in their cultivations. The sword Qi wasn't able to injure Cultivator Bai in the slightest and dissipated in an instant. But before Meng Di was captured by the him, Cultivator Bai's body suddenly trembled and he fell flat on the ground. The light shining from his hand had disappeared without a trace.

Meng Di couldn't help but blankly stand in place. He was at a completely loss.

The boy expressionlessly rubbed his small hands and snorted, "Your sect's Grand Qi Hand has been well refined. But still you forget that I didn't come here only to play chess."

Apart from Han Li, no one else in the room had noticed how the boy had restrained the scholarly man.

Han Li narrowed his eyes as he watched the scholarly man fall to the floor and then looked at the boy with an odd gaze in his eyes.

In the same moment Cultivator Bai took action, Han Li made an astonishing discovery that a red string had suddenly shot out from the boy. As a result, the string shot into the scholarly man's body and he promptly collapsed.

He had initially believed this to be a flying needle magic treasure, but under his spiritual sense, he astonishedly noticed that the red string was made of a dense, icy Qi. Much to Han Li's amazement, this string was actually refined from sword Qi!

He had previously heard that once talented sword cultivators reached a certain stage of cultivation, they were able to transform sword Qi into string as they desired, turning it into a battle-deciding attack! This was the first time he had witnessed this. It was unfathomable just how sword Qi was able to reach this stage.

The boy turned to the old man he was playing chess with and

said, “Martial Nephew Hu, lock him up in the dragon cave. Keep him alive. Your Seniors still have a use for him!”

The long-faced old man felt his heart tremble and he acknowledged his words. He stepped over to the fallen cultivator Bai and carried him over to the side of the room, disappearing without a trace.

Han Li’s gaze then turned to look at Du Dong. He did notice that his expression was calm, but under closer scrutiny, Han Li discovered that he was holding his hands in a fist.

When Han Li saw this, he faintly smiled and paid him no more attention.

Chapter 631: Spirit Well Tree

“Alright, the matter has already been settled. Do as you will. Don’t mind this old man, I still need to properly analyze my moves from the last game.” The boy waved his hand to the other cultivators and lowered his head as he closely examined the chessboard.

When the Core Formation cultivators heard this, they hurriedly brought the party over to a side of the hall.

Shortly after leaving the stone hall, the Hundred Possibilities Pavilion cultivator couldn’t help but sigh, “I truly didn’t think that Fellow Daoist Bai was actually... Junior Martial Brother Yue, did you know about this beforehand?”

“I didn’t. Senior Lan merely said that he was coming here for a bit of business. How could I further ask?” The yellow-clothed cultivator’s expression grew somewhat unsightly.

With that said, the Hundred Possibilities Pavilion cultivator shut his mouth and didn’t mention the matter any further to the group of disciples behind him.

Under this gloomy atmosphere, Han Li and the rest of the party continued walking through a long corridor. After making a turn, they arrived before a set of faintly yellow stone doors. There was a man with disheveled hair sitting in front of it.

Although this person’s face was covered by his messy hair, one could tell his age from his white hair.

The yellow-clothed cultivator wore a respectful expression when he spotted him.

“Brother Wei, I’ve brought the disciples of the Sword Trial Assembly. Is it alright for them to come in?”

The disheveled-haired man responded with a profoundly deep voice, “Since they’ve already arrived, they may come in. But since

the Wine Nectar is shedding slower than we anticipated, they must wait a while.”

Han Li quickly swept his gaze towards the man and a cold glint flickered from his eyes. This man was a Core Formation cultivator at the peak of false Nascent stage. Han Li couldn't help but take notice of him.

When the grey-clothed old man heard him, his expression revealed a trace of excitement. He stepped forward and said with a trembling voice, “Senior Martial Brother Wei, are... are you doing well?”

This person was a Drifting Cloud cultivator!

The disheveled-haired cultivator sighed and slowly said, “It seems in the many years I haven't seen Junior Martial Brother Yu, you've grown quite elderly.”

“Senior Martial Brother, why...”

This Senior Martial Brother Wei calmly said, “Enough. Since we've reunited, our destiny together hasn't run out. Don't speak anymore of what happened that year. When I entered this place, I made a death oath to condense a Nascent Soul or never leave. Besides, I've also found out from our two Martial Uncles that the sect is being cleanly handled by Junior Martial Brother Feng. I'm not worried in the slightest.”

When the grey-clothed old man heard this, his expression grew dim and he stifled the questions that he wished to ask.

“Junior Martial Brothers, wait for a moment. I will open the restrictions and allow you into the sacred area.” Old Man Wei stood up and shot a magic seal towards the yellow stone door. It then silently opened immediately after.

Having yet to see what was clearly behind it, he felt a wave of pure spiritual Qi envelop him.

As expected, this was where the Spirit Well Tree was located.

He felt that this pure spiritual Qi wasn't inferior to the jade spirit well in the slightest. In fact, it felt as if it were slightly superior. It was worthy of its reputation as the best spirit well.

Under Old Man Wei's guidance, Han Li and company were brought through the door through a huge cave.

This cave was about a kilometer wide and was a hundred meters tall. It appeared as if they were underground.

What was particularly shocking about the scene was the many various-sized stalactites and stalagmites that formed a natural stone forest. A majority of the cave was densely filled with them, forming a small maze.

Under closer examination, Han Li discovered faint white lights twinkling from between the stone pillars. It seemed as if someone had placed some sort of restriction there.

As Han Li continued to ponder, Old Man Wei led the party to the edge of the stone forest and took out an ancient, palm-sized white mirror with the flip of his hand. Then with a quick mutter, he raised his hand and shot a white beam of light from the mirror into the stone forest.

With a woosh, the beam of light disappeared into the stone forest. He soon put the mirror away and wordlessly stood in place with his hands behind his back.

While the young cultivators were left confused, the ground suddenly trembled and a shocking scene occurred.

The forest of stone began to glow with milky-white sparkling light. Soon after, the light turned yellow and the various stone pillars began to move away. By the time the young disciples recovered from their shock, a straight path had emerged from the stone forest.

Han Li's heart stirred upon seeing this, but his expression remained calm.

The many cultivators walked down the small path and walked towards the center of the stone forest at a leisurely pace, eventually reaching the legendary Spirit Well Tree at the center.

Han Li glanced at the ten meter tall object in front of him and thought, 'Is that truly the Spirit Well Tree?'

The object in front of him was as thick as an arm and was a faint green. It appeared entirely unlike a tree and more like a pillar of stone.

However, the entirety of the cave's astonishing spiritual Qi was truly coming from this bumpy stone pillar, and there was a faint golden barrier of light surrounding it, covering even the roots that emerged above the ground. From how carefully it was protected, it appeared to truly be the Spirit Well Tree.

As Han Li silently cursed, the other cultivators each wore a fiery expression as they each gazed at the tree. If they were to directly cultivate underneath the tree, they would be able to make rapid progress given that they didn't encounter any bottlenecks.

Han Li didn't pay attention to the Spirit Well Tree for long. His attention soon dropped onto the jade bottle at the foot of the spirit well tree. The bottle was about half way full and slowly emitted a strong medicinal aroma.

Han Li mused, 'Could that be that be the half-refined Brightsight Water?'

When the others arrived ten meters away from the Spirit Well Tree, they stopped. Only Old Man Wei continued to walk forward. It seemed the barrier had no effect on him since he managed to pass through without obstruction.

When the old man arrived in front of the spirit well tree, he circled around it and raised his hand, pressing it against the center of the tree. His fingers then began to sparkle with green light as he released spiritual power.

When the others outside saw this, they couldn't help but hold their breath, fearing that they would disturb the old man.

A short moment later, Old Man Wei shook his head and withdrew his hand. The green light promptly faded away.

The old man turned around and calmly said, "The Spirit Well Tree hasn't reached the optimal point to extract the Wine Nectar. There are still eight hours to go. Before this, you may rest nearby the tree. I have already prepared the Brightsight Water. It only needs the Wine Nectar to finish."

"Then we'll do as Brother Wei says." Two Core Formation cultivators nodded their heads. The old man surnamed Yu was particularly obedient.

As for Han Li and company, they each sat around the stone tree under the instructions of the Core Formation cultivators, and began to cultivate.

Old Man Wei then lowered his body and grabbed onto the jade bottle by the Spirit Well Tree, casually tossing it into his sleeve. The faint light barrier then suddenly released a blinding light and prevented anyone from clearly seeing what was happening within.

Han Li frowned, seeing that the others were indifferent to the scene, and began to speak with Silvermoon.

Silvermoon slowly said, "Brother Han, why have you called for me?"

Han Li insipidly responded, "Your earth movement techniques are superb. Would you be able to secretly enter the light barrier? I only need to you acquire the root of the Spirit Well Tree and take it back to me."

"Brother Han, please wait a moment. I will make an attempt in my tool spirit form." Once that was said, Silvermoon materialized as a fist-sized wolf and secretly bore into the earth underneath Han

Li.

Han Li closed his eyes with an unchanged expression and sunk into a meditative state.

Han Li then suddenly raised his brows and narrowly opened his eyes for his gaze to drop onto Du Dong.

Sitting at the corner to the group, he motionlessly drooped his head down with his hands forming a incantation gesture, appearing as if he was cultivating.

When Han Li saw this, he smirked and inwardly scoffed at him.

Chapter 632: A Plot Unfolds

The others didn't perceive of Du Dong's small movements, but Han Li had already detected his every movement. He had earlier spread out his spiritual sense to observe his surroundings in case of contingencies.

Although Du Dong appeared to be meditating, his lips trembled. He was clearly speaking through voice transmission to his conspirator in the room.

Fearing that he would alarm Dong Du, Han Li didn't forcefully eavesdrop. Instead, he swept his spiritual sense for any hidden cultivators and ended up finding nothing out of the ordinary.

Han Li's mind quickly stirred and his gaze swept past several people. For a while, he was unable to determine who was the suspect. But Han Li then heard Silvermoon's voice in his mind.

"Brother Han, the Spirit Well Tree's light barrier reaches underground as well. Although I have a way for forcing through it, I cannot guarantee that it won't disturb the Core Formation cultivator within the barrier. Should I break through?" Silvermoon softly said.

Han Li replied without a moment of thought, "Don't rashly take action! Force will only be used as a last resort. I reckon that in the chaos soon to come, there will be an opportunity to take action. Come back for now."

Silvermoon obeyed and silently returned into Han Li's body. He then closed his eyes and did nothing else apart from taking note of Du Dong's actions.

After an unknown time has passed, Du Dong ceased speaking and he raised his hand, glancing around with a strange expression.

Han Li's heart trembled. Just as he wondered whether or not he was about to take action, Du Dong unexpectedly lowered his head

once more. Nothing had occurred, leaving Han Li baffled.

At that moment, a huge quake violently reverberated throughout the cave. All the meditating cultivators suddenly opened their eyes in alarm and they glanced at each other in astonishment.

The grey-clothed old man and the other two Core Formation cultivators revealed a trace of astonishment, but the yellow-clothed cultivator frowned and hastily walked towards the stone gate. However, before he even arrived, the door opened to reveal a long-faced cultivator Hu walking in with a sullen expression.

“Senior Hu, what happened?” The yellow-clothed cultivator hastily asked.

The long-faced old man replied with a blood-thirsty tone, “This place was attacked! A group of concealed cultivators attacked the spell formation outside the valley. Not only are they Core Formation cultivators, but there also seems to be a Nascent Soul eccentric among them. It seems they aren’t from the Righteous Dao Alliance, but from the Six Devil Dao Sects. The other powers wouldn’t take such bold, heavy actions. Senior Lan has already left to take charge of the spell formation, you must follow me and support the defense. Leave behind Senior Martial Brother Wei. As for these disciples, postpone the matter of the Brightsight water for now. Fellow Daoist Yue, bring these disciples to a safe room. Senior Martial Brother Wei, if anyone dares to enter the cave during this time, kill them without hesitation.”

Old Man Wei calmly replied. “I understand. Brother Hu, go ahead and take them. I’ll stand guard here.”

When the long-faced old man heard this, he nodded his head with a relaxed expression and immediately brought the grey-clothed old man and the middle-aged man out.

The yellow-clothed cultivator ran to Han Li and the disciples, ordering, “You heard him. The eye cleansing is postponed. I will lead you to a safe room.” He then turned around and left the cave

in large strides.

The young cultivators didn't dare to delay and hastily followed after him.

Han Li calmly followed after them and inwardly sneered upon seeing Du Dong sincerely follow them out of the cave without taking any action.

Du Dong had acted calmly until now and didn't reveal the slightest worry. Han Li found this particularly suspicious. This occurred at far too perfect a time for Du Dong to be uninvolved.

A short moment later, the ten disciples followed the yellow-robed cultivator west and entered a large stone room. After giving them several orders, he departed, clearly heading towards the battle above.

At that moment, a large eruption occurred in the distance, causing the ground to violently tremble. It seemed to be a result of the bitter fighting outside.

Seeing that the yellow-clothed cultivators departed, the disciples began to gather together into their own sects and whisper.

Han Li, Du Dong, Mu Peiling, and Sun Huo stood together.

Sun Huo sighed and vented, "I truly didn't expect that the Ancient Sword Sect's Martial Uncle Bai was a Righteous Dao spy. I previously felt quite a bit of respect from him, thinking that he was a vagrant cultivator that managed to reach Core Formation!"

Mu Peiling coldly glanced at the youth and emotionlessly said, "Junior Martial Brother Sun, did you truly believe that a vagrant cultivator would be able to form a core so easily? Without the support from a large supporter, how could someone possibly acquire the ability to enter Core Formation? However, Junior Martial Brother Sun is a genuine vagrant cultivator that has already been scouted by many clans. Would it not be better for

Junior Martial Brother Sun to join one of them for greater assistance in the future?”

The determined youth wryly laughed and boldly said, “I am still unconvinced that I must join a cultivation clan to form a core. I still feel it beneath my dignity to join one.”

His gaze then unconsciously wandered onto the woman’s beautiful face and revealed a trace of passion. However, Mu Peiling seemed unaware of this and didn’t continue speaking.

Du Dong then suddenly said, “However, Martial Uncle Bai does seem to be a pitiful individual.”

Mu Peiling bright eyes glanced at the large man in surprise. Sun Huo was also surprised by his words and wore an expression of doubt, asking, “Pitiful? Martial Nephew Du, what do you mean?”

Du Dong smiled in his ordinary, simple manner and paid them no heed. His gaze then turned to Han Li and he mysteriously said, “Junior Martial Brother Han, do you think my words make sense?”

Han Li didn’t reveal the slightest surprise that Du Dong turned the conversation towards him and indifferently replied, “No, I don’t know much of Martial Uncle Bai. I’m afraid I can’t say!”

“Is that so? However, I feel that...”

Just as Du Dong thought to say something further, Sun Huo angrily rebuked him for ignoring him, “Martial Nephew Du, you are far too imprudent. Did you not hear my words?”

A cold glint flickered from Du Dong’s eyes as he glanced at the youth. With a sinister expression he said, “Why are you speaking so loudly? I heard you, but I have no interest in replying to such rubbish.”

“What! You...”

Mu Peiling discovered something was amiss and her face grew sullen. With her hand on her storage pouch she icily asked, “Just

who are you?”

The other disciples noticed that something was odd and couldn't help but look at them with astonishment.

A man's voice suddenly echoed from outside the room. “Hehe! He's a direct bloodline disciple of the Devil Dao's Thousand Illusions Sect. I hope that answer is to your satisfaction!”

Bang! The doors were shattered open.

The sect disciples were each greatly shocked and they hastily took out this magic tools with vigilance. However, a familiar man had emerged beyond the shattered door.

“Martial Uncle Bai!” An Ancient Sword Sect disciple couldn't help but shout out upon seeing him. His expression soon changed and his face was filled with disbelief.

When the others disciples saw this azure-robed cultivator appear before them, they were at a loss. They had clearly seen him restrained not long ago, but yet he still appeared here. And from his lively spirits, it appeared as if his magic power wasn't restricted in the slightest.

Du Dong didn't appear surprised by Cultivator Bai's appearance in the least and coldly asked him, “Why did you arrive so late? Any longer and we would've taken action first.”

Cultivator Bai bluntly replied, “Humph! You don't know how fearsome that old eccentric's sword thread is. Although I had prepared for it, it had restrained me at the time. If it weren't for your continuous guarantees that he wouldn't have dared to take my life, did you think I would've cooperated with your side?”

“Hehe! We didn't expect that the old eccentric would personally come. However, it had gone mostly as expected. Martial Uncle Feng and Senior Qin should've bought us enough time.”

After hearing their conversation, the other disciples knew that things were far from good. One of the Ancient Sword Sect disciples

was particularly quick to react and immediately flew off on his magic tool towards the door in an attempt to escape.

But as soon as this disciple flew by Cultivator Bai's side, a sinister expression appeared from his face and a dazzling white light flashed.

With a miserable scream, the disciple and the sword were split into two. With a clang, the corpse fell onto the ground.

Chapter 633: The Greater Sifting Mirage Technique VS The Fox Enrapturing Arts

In the instant the disciple was slain, the other cultivator's faces grew deathly pale. They began to release each of their defensive magic tools as they stared at Cultivator Bai. For a moment, no one dared to move.

Mu Peiling's expression greatly changed and she stepped away from Du Dong, releasing her own ribbon magic tool around her. As for Sun Huo, he had recoiled at the sight of this incisive strike and grimaced as his gaze flickered between Cultivator Bai and Du Dong.

Han Li silently slipped to a corner of the room and his gaze continuously swept around. It was unknown what was going through his mind.

At that moment, an imposing aura suddenly swelled from Du Dong. With lines of black talisman characters appearing on his neck, black light suddenly surged from his body as he underwent a sudden transformation. He grew to two meters in height, his appearance became malevolent, and his cultivation surged to mid Core Formation stage.

When Cultivator Bai saw Du Dong's astonishing transformation, he couldn't help but laugh, "Very nice! If the Thousand Illusions Sect were to say they were ranked second in concealment techniques in the Heavenly South, none would dare to proclaim themselves as first. The Greater Sifting Mirage Technique is truly worthy of being your sect's signature technique."

"Humph!" The transformed Du Dong merely snorted. He then gloomily swept past the crowd and his eyes stopped on Han Li. A malicious expression flickered from his face.

Woosh. The cultivators in the room only caught sight of the Du

Dong disappearing a blur before reappearing beside Han Li. With a wave his hand, Han Li's light barrier was shattered in an instant and his hand pierced into Han Li's chest like a bolt of lightning. He then withdrew his hand with a bloody heart in his grasp.

Han Li's corpse fell onto the floor.

"Ah!" When the other disciples saw this bloody scene, they shouted out in alarm, believing that they would be next to fall. Their hearts were all struck with terror.

"Huh?" The transformed Du Dong revealed a strange expression as if in disbelief that Han Li had died so easily. He frowned for a moment and glanced at his hand. From the warm and bloody heart on his hand, it appeared he had truly killed him.

The scholarly man grew alarmed at Du Dong's sudden attack, and he furiously shouted, "What are you doing!? You can't kill these disciples; a few of them have influence. One of them is even a close descendant of Eccentric Heavenvenge. Don't attack them as you please!"

Du Dong indifferently snorted, "If you can kill one, then so can I. Besides, given how odd that youngster was, it was better to take the initiative to deal with him. Also, this person definitely wasn't Eccentric Heavenvenge's descendant. He entered the sect the same time I did." Soon after, he tossed the heart onto the ground.

The scholar's expression relaxed and he gravely said, "So long as you realize this, that's fine! Although I don't know whether or not Eccentric Heavenvenge's descendant is male or female, nor do I know what sect they entered, the sects should've given consideration to Eccentric Heavenvenge's might and should've allowed them to enter the top ten disciples so that they may use the Brightsight Water. It would be a great inconvenience if they actually died. As for the person I killed, I was well aware of his background, and he definitely wasn't the eccentric's descendant."

"Fine, I'll refrain from killing the others as I wish. However, you

can't have them casually stir up trouble. I'll have to properly knock them out for the time being!" With that said, Du Dong began to twirl in place and black radiance suddenly swept enveloped the entire room.

The other cultivators felt somewhat relieved by their words, but a black radiance instantly rendered them unconscious as soon as it reached them.

The scholarly man nodded his head with satisfaction, "Let's go. We can't delay here for too long."

"Alright."

With those curt words, they immediately walked out the room in large stride.

But when Du Dong walked out, he felt somewhat uneasy and unconsciously glanced down at the heartless corpse. Han Li was lying in a pool of his own blood, dead as could be.

Du Dong couldn't help but scoff, feeling that he was overly suspicious, and he followed after the scholarly man with peace of mind. Once the two departed, the room grew deathly quiet.

A short moment later, a young woman's voice filled the room.

"Brother Han, my Fox Enrapturing Arts must surely be above that of the Greater Sifting Mirage Technique! That man's cultivation wasn't weak, but he couldn't tell whether or not he truly killed someone. Truly laughable!"

Soon after that was said, Han Li's bloody corpse began to shine with faint white light. Eventually, that light turned silver and concentrated into a foot-long, snow-white fox.

Han Li's voice began to slowly speak from a meter behind the white fox, "It truly is impressive. I find it odd how a wolf like you can be so proficient in fox techniques. However, this might also have to do with their weaker cultivation. Were they late Core Formation cultivators, it might've been difficult to fool them. As

for the Greater Sifting Mirage Technique, I must admit it is outstanding. I was incapable of telling his true cultivation while he concealed himself.” With a flash of yellow light, he walked out from the stone wall with a wolf-headed jade scepter in his hand.

At an unknown time, Han Li stealthily entered the wall and had Silvermoon stand in for Han Li through an illusion technique. Although she couldn’t maintain the transformed body for long, it was more than enough to fool the two Core Formation cultivators for the time being.

Silvermoon was unconvinced and she curled her lips, “Is this technique truly that amazing? Was Brother Han simply not mistaken?”

Han Li casually replied, “With the Great Development Technique, my spiritual sense is on par with that of a Nascent Soul cultivator. Yet, I was still unable to discover anything amiss from him. It could very well be the top concealment technique in the entire world, let alone the Heavenly South.”

Silvermoon tilted her small head, but she didn’t rebut him.

Han Li walked towards the center of the room and gazed at those lying on the ground, noticing that they were all unconscious. His eyes then fell onto the black-robed youth, Meng Di.

Silvermoon seemed to guessed what Han Li thought and she jumped onto the youth and snatched the storage pouch from his waist. She then obediently jumped back to Han Li’s side and delivered it to him.

Han Li accepted it with a faint smile and swept his spiritual sense into it. After taking the jade box containing the Spirit Tempering Pill, he carelessly tossed the pouch onto the youth’s body.

Since this item held little use towards youth at this cultivation, Han Li happily accepted it.

After putting away the jade box, he rubbed his chin and said,

“Let’s go. Those two should’ve already arrived at the Spirit Well Tree’s cave. Let’s go and take a look.” After Silvermoon jumped into his sleeve, he flew out the room in a streak of azure light.

At that moment, there were continuous explosions occurring from the outside. When Han Li heard them, a trace of doubt momentarily appeared on his face, but he soon ignored the sounds.

When Han Li arrived at the cave, the stone gate was wide open and was void of restrictions. There were also shouts of furious alarm faintly coming from the inside.

Du Dong furiously shouted, “Brother Wei, what do you mean? How can you suddenly betray us when matters have reached this far? Could it be that you’ve forgotten the great kindness the sect master bestowed upon you? Or have you forgotten how you were a disciple of the Heavenly Fiend Sect after staying at the Drifting Cloud Sect for so many years?”

Han Li’s heart stirred upon hearing this. But before he could further listen on their conversation, his expression suddenly changed and he disappeared from his original location.

A group of eight high grade cultivators suddenly entered the cave. Shockingly, there was even a Nascent Soul cultivator amongst them. These cultivators all concealed themselves into the earth with a barrier of yellow light as if in preparation of an ambush. As a result, the three that were already in the hall remained ignorant of them.

Han Li then snuck in after them and stood at a far corner, observing everything in silence.

These underground cultivators were all familiar to Han Li. They were the group of cultivators that should’ve been defending the formation from the outside. Even the boy Nascent Soul Cultivator surnamed Lan was among them.

Han Li’s spiritual sense easily penetrated the light barriers of

these cultivators, discovering the Core Formation cultivators that he had seen along the way, along with Cultivator Bai's Dao companion who was now deathly pale. The woman was also carrying an unconscious man in her arms, the long-faced old man surnamed Hu.

Han Li felt his breath turn cold upon see them. At the same time, doubt began to well in his heart. The explosions outside had yet to stop as if there were still a battle occurring outside. However, there wasn't actually a battle to destroy the formation. It was all a trap.

At that moment, the dishevel-haired old man slowly spoke from within the golden light barrier, "I know that the Righteous and Devil Dao had discovered an ancient Profound Goddess's Palm near the Moulan Plains. Although this tree has long shriveled, so long as it is fed with the Wine Nectar of the Spirit Well Tree, it will flourish once more and regain life. As a result, we've infiltrated the three sects many years ago as disciples in a reckless attempt to acquire it. At the time, we had even abandoned our plans to topple the three sects. And now even the young master of the Thousand Illusions Sect braved danger to infiltrate here as Fellow Daoist Du to give orders for the Righteous and Devil Dao to cooperate."

Chapter 634: A Plot Revealed

The scholarly man sneered and said, “What? Has Brother Wei grown fond of this place in the hundred years he had stayed here?”

The disheveled-haired old man emotionlessly said, “Of course not, but I have developed a bit of attachment towards this place, having spent so many years here. After all, to be human, is to feel. In these long years, Elder Yun of the Drifting Cloud Sect treated me as if I were kin. Not only did he impart divine techniques onto me, but he even saved my life during critical moments and faced immense opposition to grant me authority over the Drifting Cloud Sect. I am incapable of ignoring such kindness. I cannot allow you two to take the Spirit Well Tree away.”

Du Dong smiled instead of growing angry. He sinisterly threatened, “Good, good! Brother Wei must mean to act as a genuine Drifting Cloud Sect Elder. However, you forget what will happen if we were to speak the truth and reveal your true identity as a spy for the Heavenly Fiend Sect. Do you think you’ll be able to freely remain?”

The disheveled-haired old man calmly replied, “I don’t need your reminder. I am perfectly aware. Why do you think I am restrained here? I’ve long gathered suspicion from the two Martial Uncles. There is merely a lack of concrete evidence. That is why I was forcefully removed from power in the sect and was trapped in this confined place. Of course, I’ve also received much kindness from the Heavenly Fiend Sect. Since Fellow Daoist Du has shown me the Sect Master Xie’s token, I can give you a bit of the Wine Nectar even though I can’t allow you to take away the tree. This should be enough to repay the past kindness of the Heavenly Fiend Sect.”

“What? You will only give us the Wine Nectar? I...”

Du Dong expression relaxed and he interrupted the scholarly man, “Fine, just give us the Wine Nectar. With that in hand, we

won't need the Spirit Well Tree. After all, our Righteous and Devil Dao sects possess countless treasures. Although we may not have something like the Spirit Well Tree, we have plenty other types of spirit wells."

When Cultivator Bai heard this, he glanced at Du Dong in surprise, but after a moment more of thought, he remained silent. After all, his orders were all given to him by the Thousand Illusion Sect's young master. Although he didn't know when the Righteous Dao Alliance and the Six Devil Dao Sects grew so close, he may as well defer to his judgement of the matter.

Cultivator Wei coldly said, "Since you Fellow Daoists both approve, I will take out the Wine Nectar from the restrictions. But first, I will get the ugly matters out of the way. If you plan to take advantage of when I release the restrictions, don't blame me for being ruthless."

Du Dong chuckled and pledged with a calm expression, "Be at ease, we won't do something so foolish. After all, this Spirit Well Tree is a trivial affair compared to the Profound Goddess' Palm."

The old man then nodded and took out a small white bottle from his storage pouch.

"Prepare to..."

"Prepare what? To give our three sects' most precious asset to our enemies?" Before the dishevel-haired old man could finish, ten sword threads shot out from below the ground in a flash of red light, tightly tying him down.

At that same moment, yellow light flashed from the direction of the cave's entrance revealing the previously hidden cultivators. They unwaveringly approached Du Dong and Cultivator Bai.

When Cultivator Bai and Du Dong saw this, their expressions greatly changed.

At that moment, the boy surnamed Lan appeared behind the

restrained Cultivator Wei.

The boy stared at the two with an icy expression and said, “Good, very good. Us old men long knew that the Righteous and Devilish Dao had embedded many spies within our ranks. And since we didn’t have any concrete evidence towards you, we couldn’t cleanly dispose of you. After all, it would be extremely costly if we were to wrongfully kill a Core Formation cultivator. But since you’ve now taken the initiative to reveal yourselves, I no longer need to restrain myself.”

Cultivator Bai’s expression was filled with disbelief and he was at a loss for words.

As for Du Dong, he managed to force a smile despite his pale complexion and ask, “Lan, why are you here? Outside...”

The boy had no intention of concealing his plans and indifferently said, “Do you truly believe that Old Devil Blaze and Scholar Golden Mirror would be enough to fully take up our attention? At this moment, they should’ve been surrounded by my Fellow Daoists from the Drifting Cloud Sect. The sounds of attack from the outside was something deliberately fabricated so that you would obediently take action. Since we wished to deal a blow against the Righteous and Devilish Dao so that they may learn their place, we may as well wipe our ranks of their spies.”

“What? Those Martial Uncles aren’t outside?” Cultivator Bai’s rigid face instantly became panicked.

The white-clothed woman couldn’t help ask her Dao Companion with a trembling voice, “Senior Martial Brother Bai, you... you truly were a Righteous Dao spy?” Her face was deathly pale.

When he heard the young woman, the scholarly man’s panic disappeared and he could only bitterly smile. He opened his mouth to speak, but he couldn’t utter any words.

The boy then pursed his lips and imposingly declared, “I am

unwilling to bully the weak, so how about you obediently surrender yourselves? Or would you rather this old man use force?”

When the two heard this, their expressions changed.

But at that moment, a streak of white light flew in from outside the cave, revealing the old man surnamed Jiang drenched in sweat. He urgently shouted, “Martial Uncle Lan, bad news! The Drifting Cloud Sect’s Senior Cheng sent a sound transmission talisman for immediate reinforcements. His forces were ambushed by the Heavenly Fiend Sect and the Thousand Illusions Sect, and they are currently locked in battle.” When that was said, the cultivators in the room were shocked. Were it not the three sects that were supposed to ambush them?

The boy was startled by these words and pondered for a moment before loudly cursing.

“You devil child! You actually planned around us. It seems this old man can’t keep you alive.” The boy then shot a streak of fiery light from his mouth, intending on executing the two before him.

But in that instant, the originally restrained Cultivator Wei loudly shouted. His arm grew several times in size and his body glowed with purple-red light as he broke through his restraints and fiercely moved to grab the boy.

From the imposing aura of the flicker purple light covering his fingers, the boy’s skull would most certainly fracture if it were to make contact.

The boy wore an expression of alarm. Having just spat out his magic treasure, he could only suck in his chest and puff out his cheeks in the face of the sudden ambush.

Another ball of fiery red light left his mouth and collided against Cultivator Wei’s purple claw.

Hiss. Like scalding iron against flesh, Cultivator Wei’s hand

slowed down as it struck through the red light. The boy took advantage of this opportunity to instantly fly out from the sacred tree's light barrier in a mist of red light.

“Truelord Heavenfiend!”

The boy gloomily shouted out the title of the Heavenly Fiend Sect Master and wordlessly stared at Cultivator Wei. He then pointed to some direction and had his magic treasure revolve around him. It soon transformed into a scarlet python, baring its fangs as if it were alive.

The head of the dishevel-haired cultivator drooped down as if he were unconscious, but a lazy, unfamiliar voice was still uttered from his mouth, “Hehe! I didn’t expect for Fellow Daoist Lan to so quickly recognize me. This Sect Master has long heard of the Child Fire Dragon. However, it is quite unfortunate that I currently cannot truly fight with you.”

When Han Li saw this, he immediately recalled the Greater Possession Technique that Zenith Yin had used on Wu Chou. Although there were a few differing aspects, it was certain to be a similar Devilish Dao technique.

According to what Han Li knew, this technique had to be applied to the target beforehand in a complicated procedure before it could be used. It seemed the Heavenly Fiend Sect master had done this as a precaution before he placed Cultivator Wei inside the Drifting Cloud Sect.

From these sudden turn of events, Han Li’s mind suddenly stirred and he recalled something. He spoke to the small fox in his sleeve with a serious tone, “Silvermoon, immediately return to the safe room and transform my form with grave injuries. We cannot allow others to discover my absence. As for why I am still alive, play it by ear. I will quickly return, just don’t reveal my true cultivation or identity.”

Upon hearing Han Li’s solemn tone, she wordlessly flew into the

ground and dug straight back to the safe room.

At that moment, the Truelord Heavenfiend raised his hand and glanced at the small bottle of Wine Nectar before tossing it to Du Dong. Afterwards he regretfully glanced at the Spirit Well Tree before indifferently saying, “Bring that item back. I will hold the Child Fire Dragon down while you escape. But you had best be quick, I can’t give you much time.” Once that was said, he suddenly shot out and prepared by Old Man Jiang’s side. He sinisterly smiled and fiercely struck with his hand glowing in purple light.

Chapter 635: Acquiring Roots

“Shameless!” Seeing that the possessed Cultivator Wei dared to attempt to kill someone in his presence, the scarlet light python in front of the boy trembled and split into countless translucent strands as it shot towards Truelord Heavenfiend.

At that same moment, Old Man Jiang’s expression greatly changed. He hastily spat out a yellow flying sword to protect himself and he flusteredly ran backwards. He didn’t dare to meet the sect master’s strike.

Truelord Heavenfiend strangely smiled and his direction suddenly changed, appearing at the side of the white-clothed woman. His purple claw suddenly moved to grab onto her arm.

The white-clothed woman had been at a loss ever since realizing the scholarly man was a spy. But in a face of Truelord Heavenfiend’s sudden attack, her complexion paled and she tossed the long-faced old man onto the ground without a single thought. Her hands then formed an incantation gesture and an azure streak flew out from her sleeve, attempting to block the incoming attack to the best of her abilities.

Truelord Heavenfiend wildly laughed in response and blurred once more, grabbing onto the long-faced old man that was tossed away. He then formed a fist with his free hand and covered it in turbulent purple light, striking against the incoming fiery red sword threads.

With a muffled groan, the old devil couldn’t help but recoil from the strike. However, he used its momentum to carry the long-faced old man back to his original location.

Though some unknown method, the long-faced old man was somehow roused. He leapt up and said, “Many thanks for Truelord’s rescue!”

“Humph! Don’t be mistaken! If we weren’t currently short on manpower, I wouldn’t have saved a Righteous Dao junior like you. You’ll have to preserve your life with your own skill.” Truelord Heavenfiend coldly snorted and shot towards the boy surnamed Lan in a blur.

This time, he was truly going to tie down the Child Fire Dragon and allow Du Dong the opportunity to escape.

“Go! The outside restrictions have already been sabotaged by me. Its power should only be a tenth of its original. We will be able to easily break through.” The long-faced old man appeared to also be a decisive character. After shouting to Du Dong and Cultivation Bai, he took the initiative to charge towards the Core Formation cultivators guarding the exit.

Du Dong and the scholarly man were delighted by what they heard. With one taking out two white swords and the other enveloping his body in black radiance, the three changed towards the cave exit.

The three sects’ Core Formation cultivators weren’t about to easily allow the three to escape. They all summoned their magic treasures to give them a painful welcome. The cave suddenly erupted into battle between the two sides. With furious shouts and sounds of explosions, various colored lights filled the cave.

When Han Li saw this, he felt that his opportunity was drawing near and decided to take action. With the jade scepter in hand, his body flashed in yellow light. He burrowed into the ground and hastily used an earth movement technique to silently draw close to the Spirit Well Tree’s roots.

Busy with their own battles, the cultivators in the cave hadn’t taken notice of Han Li’s opportunistic actions. As a result, Han Li arrived before a faint golden barrier blocking his way.

A spirited glint appeared in Han Li’s eyes. He raised his hands, releasing a torch of azure light from each of his fingers, and

silently pressed them against the barrier. The golden light intertwined with the azure light for a moment and the light barrier began to tremble.

If it were peacetime, the golden barrier's trembling would've long been perceived by the cultivators guarding the Spirit Well Tree. But in the middle of fierce combat, this small movement hadn't aroused the slightest notice.

A short moment later, his hands had forcibly pierced through the golden light and a trace of joy appeared on his face. The light from his hands surged and he fiercely pulled his hands apart, creating a slender gap in the barrier for an instant.

Woosh. Han Li's body blurred, reappearing inside before the light barrier mended itself.

Seeing that the Spirit Well Tree's roots were before him, Han Li wore a rarely seen grin.

Although the trunk of the Spirit Well Tree greatly differed from ordinary trees, its roots were ordinary apart from its exceptionally jade-green color.

A huge explosion erupted from above the ground, followed by the sound of shards of falling earth along with a series of trembles. It seems a fearsome attack had just been used.

In the following moment, Old Man Fu flusteredly said, "Quickly, chase after them. We cannot allow them to escape." The sound of rustling wind was followed by Truelord Heavenfiend's hearty laughter.

"Fellow Daoist Lan, how is the power of my Purple Deepscreen Arts? Although I had to use up this body's blood essence, I was able to easily tie you down for the time being."

"Old Devil Heavenfield, do you not care for your disciple? Even if your disciple survives, his cultivation will be mostly destroyed." Although the boy's voice was detached and emotionless, Han Li

could hear a trace of anger in his words.

“My disciple? This traitor? From what I’ve heard, he already considers himself a Drifting Cloud Sect disciple, so I have far less misgivings in using him. Huh? Old Ghost Lan? Where do you think you’re going?!” Truelord Heavenfiend’s voice was extremely calm as he said this, but his voice suddenly shouted out in alarm.

“Humph! I have no interest in tangling down with your incarnation. Those Devil Children cannot be allowed to take a Wine Nectar out from our Dreamcloud Mountains.” The boy’s voice grew more distant as if he had already left the cave.

“As if I’d so easily allow you to leave!” Truelord Heavenfiend shouted as if chasing after him.

In an instant, there was no one else left behind in the cave apart from Han Li. He grew completely at ease, no longer hesitating to take action. He extended one of his fingers shot out a sparkling beam of light. With a spark, a small portion of the root was easily cut through, causing a white liquid to overflow from the opening, filling the air with a fragrant aroma.

Han Li paid no notice to the white liquid spilling out. With his body shining with yellow light, he directly grasped onto the root segment and climbed to the surface.

He swept his gaze past the barrier and spotted a ten meter large hole in the cave with sparkling rocks that were scattered all around.

It seems this Truelord Heavenfiend had completely broken through the restrictions of the resilient cave walls through a single strike. This impressive display of skill should’ve given Du Dong and the others the opportunity to escape!

Han Li hurried after seeing this. He took out a finely carved jade box from his storage pouch and carefully placed the root segment into the box.

After putting it away with a heavy expression, Han Li revealed satisfaction but something soon came to mind. He may have acquired the Spirit Well Tree's root, but he had still yet to acquire the refinement formula for the Brightsight Water and the Spirit Tempering Pill. Although that Truelord Heavenfiend managed to possess the body of the dishevel-haired old man, the body couldn't endure his techniques for long. He would certainly be defeated by the boy before long.

With flashes of light flickering from Han Li's hands as he stood next to the barrier of light, his expression suddenly stirred. With a trace of astonishment on his face, he frowned and walked around to the back of the Spirit Well Tree.

There was a yellow prayer mat and a foot-wide stone platform. The stone platform had a jade slip on top of it that was glistening with a faint green light.

Han Li swept his spiritual sense past the several items and discovered that there were no hidden restrictions on the items. He raised his hand and shot an azure mist from his palm, sweeping the jade slip into his grasp.

Han Li gazed at the jade slip and remained still as he began to read through the contents of the jade slip with his spiritual sense.

A short moment later, Han Li withdrew his spiritual sense from the jade slip with a bewildered expression. It contained the records of the dishevel-haired cultivator's techniques and a few pill refinement insights. The refinement formula for the Spirit Tempering Pill and the Brightsight Water were astonishingly among them.

With the jade slip in hand, Han Li's mind grew vacant.

Could it be that dishevel-haired cultivator had felt his lifespan coming to an end and had prepared this jade slip? From how the jade slip had been hidden behind the Spirit Well Tree, it seemed he had left it behind for a Drifting Cloud Sect cultivator. Could this

action hold some sort of meaning?

Han Li pondered a moment more while glancing at the jade slip. He then fetched a white jade slip from his storage pouch and quickly copied over the contents.

At Han Li's current cultivation, replicating a jade slip took only a moment's worth of effort.

Han Li placed the green jade slip back in its original place and put the white replica inside his storage pouch before walking back towards the golden light barrier. Since the three sects' cultivators could come back at any moment, he'd best leave as soon as possible. In any case, he already fulfilled his objective.

Without worry of anybody spotting him, Han Li's body flowed with spiritual power, cleaving a large hole in the barrier with a spark of azure light.

In the instant the hole was formed, he directly transformed into an azure streak of light and rushed out.

Chapter 636: Return

When Han Li quietly returned to the safe room, he discovered that the young disciples were still unconscious, lying disorderly around the floor.

Although their aptitudes were exceptional, they were still only low grade disciples. It was no surprise as to why they were overlooked during the moment of the climax of the battle.

Silvermoon had already transformed into Han Li, lying on the floor in an unconscious state. When she saw that he arrived, she immediately turned back into a fox and leaped into Han Li's sleeve.

Silvermoon chuckled and asked, "How was it? Did you acquire it? By the way, nobody came. It seems Fellow Daoist was being overly careful!"

Han Li insipidly said, "It went smoothly! However, it was still better to be careful than to allow myself to be revealed."

Silvermoon easily changed the topic and worriedly asked, "However, how will Brother Han explain his survival? This seems to be quite troublesome."

"How I will explain it? Just say the truth!" Han Li appeared to not take this matter very seriously and spoke carelessly.

"The truth?" Silvermoon spoke with bewilderment.

As if having already thought of this, Han Li calmly explained, "I'll just say that I previously bought a high grade illusion talisman and used it to save my life. Those who aren't skilled in the Dao of Illusions should be none the wiser and will take the excuse at face value."

Silvermoon soon chuckled, "Not bad. That is a rather good excuse."

The following moments were rather simple. After half a day, a

yellow-clothed cultivator walked into the safe room with a solemn expression.

Seeing that all the disciples were unconscious, he sighed and formed an incantation gesture with his hands. With a flick of his finger, a streak of white light flew into each of the cultivator's bodies.

It was clear that the technique used to knock them out wasn't profound in the slightest. After a short moment, each of them regained consciousness and saw that the yellow-clothed cultivators had taken the place of Du Dong and Cultivator Bai. They grew relaxed in an instant.

Of course, when they saw that Han Li was intact and unharmed, they were greatly frightened. But Han Li soon took out an illusion talisman and gave an explanation that he had prepared in advance.

As expected, considering that few delved deeply into the Dao of Illusions, mostly no one raised any suspicions. As for the yellow-clothed cultivator, he merely glanced at Han Li in surprise and didn't further ask about it.

But for Sun Huo and Mu Peiling, they both wore a trace of doubt. After all, Du Dong had spoken to Han Li from the very start and even attacked Han Li immediately after revealing himself. It had left quite the impression on them.

Han Li wasn't particularly worried about their doubts. Since the two didn't have any proof, what could they possibly say? Besides, Du Dong's sudden attack was by no means a sign of friendliness!

With the absence of the Wine Nectar and the unknown fate of the dishevel-haired cultivator to refine the Brightsight Water, the matter of the Brightsight Water had dissolved.

As a result, the upper echelon of the three sects hurriedly announced the conclusion of the Sword Trial Assembly, only giving a magic tool to each of the final ten as compensation. The

three sects then returned back to their own sects without any intention of travelling together with each other's groups.

Seeing that their Core Formation Seniors wore such solemn and anxious faces, even an idiot would know that something drastic had happened while the ten finalists were left unconscious.

Although the low grade disciples were unsatisfied and gloomy, they could only obediently return to their sects.

Once Han Li and the others returned to the Drifting Cloud Sect, they were hastily summoned by the sect's higher echelon and were closely questioned on what had happened in the restricted area. After that, they were sent away with unsightly expressions and were ordered to keep silent.

Afterwards, Han Li came to realize that the three sects' plan to oust their spies had ended up an utter failure.

Not only did Dong Du and company manage to bring back the Wine Nectar to the Righteous and Devilish Dao with the assistance of the Heavenly Fiend Sect Master's incarnation, but they mostly managed to leave the State of Xi without any harm. However, Cultivator Bai had made a mistake and was promptly killed by Old Man Fu and the others.

As for when the Heavenly Fiend Sect Master's possession expired, the dishevel-haired cultivator was captured by the boy, and no one had heard of him since. It was unknown whether he was executed or spared.

The two Nascent Soul elders of the Drifting Cloud Sect and the three sect's various Core Formation cultivators had been ruthlessly attacked by the Devil Dao's Thousand Illusions Sect and the Heavenly Fiend Sect in an ambush. Not only were several Core Formation cultivators killed, but the Nascent Soul cultivator surnamed Cheng was heavily injured. Although there is no worry for his life, his origin Qi was greatly damaged.

This matter had greatly shaken the three sects. They began to ferociously pressure the Righteous and Devil Dao sects through the Heavenly Dao Union, but they continued to deny this matter had ever occurred. As a result, nothing came to be, leaving the three sects' upper echelon with their hands tied.

But fortunately for them, through the Heavenly Dao Union's own spies in the Righteous and Devil Dao, they were able to discover that the Wine Nectar was ineffective. After using it to water the Profound Goddess' Palm, the tree remained in its withered state without change.

This information had brought a breath of relief to the Heavenly Dao Union.

Following these events, the three factions each became more vigilant and their peaceful attitude from the last hundred years began to grow tense. Conflict became a more likely possibility as time passed by.

...

As soon as Han Li finished reporting to the sect elders, he immediately returned to his cave residence. He headed straight to the room with the Ninecurl Spirit Ginseng and planted the root of the Spirit Well Tree right next it. Since the two items were both spiritual objects born of heaven and earth, they might mutually nourish one another if they were placed close together.

In the following days after Han Li finished answering his fellow sect members about the Sword Trial Assembly, Han Li began to wholeheartedly cultivate. Perhaps due to the influence of the Sword Trial Assembly, he was finally able to breakthrough his bottleneck for the Great Development Technique. Han Li's cultivation then proceeded to advance as he simultaneously cultivated the Great Development Technique and the Azure Essence Sword Arts, much to his delight.

He clearly understood that the reason he was able to cultivate the

Great Development Technique in such a smooth manner was most likely due to the Soul Nurturing Wood beads that he wore around his neck.

Ever since he wore the beads around his neck, his spiritual sense had been gradually growing larger regardless of any effort he made to temper it. This had allowed him to rapidly progress in the Great Development Technique in an unobstructed manner, as if he were refilling a pond that had already formed.

Additionally, every time he cultivated the Great Development Technique, the Soul Nurturing Wood beads would cause his spirit to feel refreshed, allowing him to achieve greater results with less strain and effort.

During this time, Han Li began to use the green liquid to mature the root of the Spirit Well Tree every few days. As a result of a few short months, a sapling began to shoot out from the root. It appeared it was only a matter of time before it grew as large as the Spirit Well Tree in the restricted area. Han Li reckoned that it would take twenty years of meticulous care.

However, he wasn't in a hurry. He would need many years before he could reach false Nascent stage. Furthermore, he already had a Spirit Tempering Pill on hand. It didn't matter if it would take any longer.

With that thought, Han Li imagined the moment when the black-robed youth looked through his storage pouch only to astonishingly discover that the Spirit Tempering Pill had disappeared. Han Li couldn't help but find it funny.

The most important reason why he had tried so hard to acquire the Spirit Well Tree was for the Brightsight Water. With his eyes cleansed from the Brightsight Water, he would gain an immense benefit in battle. Combined with his superior spiritual sense, he would be able to repeatedly decisively strike against his foes' weaknesses.

At the same time, it wasn't as if Han Li had given up on practicing pill refinement. He was still making his own preparations to eventually refine the Ninecurl Spirit Ginseng.

With this, time slowly passed by between bitter cultivation and pill refinement.

During this time, apart from some required social interaction, Han Li didn't take a single step from his cave residence. Amidst crucial moments for his cultivation that required focused seclusion, Han Li sent Silvermoon in his place to deal with the fellow sect members that occasionally paid him a visit.

Fortunately, Silvermoon's fox body had made rapid improvements in the wake of large consumptions of medicine pills. Her illusion techniques have become increasingly intricate, revealing not the slightest flaw.

As for Mu Peiling, she still held her doubts, but after Han Li returned to the Drifting Cloud Sect, only to maintain a low profile, her suspicions eventually faded away. She came to merely view Han Li as a completely ordinary Qi Condensation cultivator.

Consequently, Han Li became more at ease for staying at the Drifting Cloud Sect.

In the blink of an eye, Han Li had spent twenty years at the Drifting Cloud Sect as a Qi Condensation disciple.

The day that he was about to condense his Nascent Soul was just around the corner.

Chapter 637: Nascent Soul (1)

Inside the pill refinement room of the small mountain's cave residence, a sliver of azure core flame left Han Li's mouth in a continuous stream, wrapping around a silver cauldron that was half a foot wide. Han Li wore a tense expression as light flickered from his entire body.

The cauldron rotated as it floated above the center of the room's spell formation.

As time slowly passed by, the pill refinement room started to be filled with a medicinal scent. Once Han Li smelled it, he felt his spirits become roused and his face revealed a trace of joy.

When this faint medicinal scent became far more concentrated, a bright light flickered from his eyes. He suddenly formed his hands into an incantation gesture and struck a corner of the spell formation with a spell seal, shouting, "Open!"

The spell formation released a series of low hums, striking the silver cauldron with intersecting streaks of red radiance. The small cauldron trembled several times before opening its lid, revealing a milk-white medicinal pill inside.

The pill was the size of a thumb and its body was translucent, glimmering with spiritual light. There were also strands of milk-white smoke that floated from around it. It was nearly indistinct as if it were a sign that the pill was otherworldly.

Upon seeing the pill, Han Li was unable to contain his joy.

The medicinal pill for the Ninecurl Spirit Ginseng was finally refined. He had failed several attempts before. If a pill wasn't formed in this attempt, there wouldn't have been enough Agate Horn and the Demon Echo Grass to make another attempt.

As for the most important ingredient, the Ninecurl Spirit Ginseng, Han Li had no worries about that. It turned out that Han

Li didn't have to use its main body to refine the medicine. He merely had to extract some liquid from its body, allowing the ginseng to continue living. Of course, while the spirit ginseng wasn't immediately killed, it suffered great damage to its origin Qi. As a result, its white rabbit incarnation became listless and lethargic.

With that in mind, after several days of careful consideration, Han Li placed down several more layers of restrictions before giving the spirit ginseng some of the green liquid. In order to be careful, Han Li started off by giving a few drops of the diluted green liquid, fearing that something unexpected would happen. Spiritual objects of heaven and earth, especially those possessing their own incarnations, were different from ordinary plants.

In the end, the green liquid had greatly restored the origin Qi of the spirit ginseng and had reinvigorated it. This had greatly relieved Han Li and he began to truly use the green liquid on it.

As a result, Han Li used the green liquid to recover its origin Qi each time he extracted some of its liquid, allowing him an unending supply.

However, this method was only effective for the Ninecurl Spirit Ginseng. Han Li was inspired to try this on other spiritual medicines, but the result was only an increase in age.

As of current, Han Li held the milky-white pill in between his fingers and carefully examined it. Its appearance and fragrance was exactly as described. As for its medicinal efficacy, he'd have to test that when the time comes.

With a slight sigh, Han Li carefully placed this difficultly acquired medicine pill in a jade box he had previously prepared. With the pill properly stored away, he walked out of the pill room.

After about sixty years of cultivation, Han Li had finally cultivated the fourth layer of the Great Development Technique, forcibly increasing the scope of his spiritual sense. With regards to

the Azure Essence Sword Arts, he had finished cultivating to the ninth layer of the great perfection stage several months before, allowing him to finally enter false Nascent stage.

Whether it be medicinal pills or techniques, Han Li was now completely prepared.

However, Han Li wasn't about to hastily start to condense a Nascent Soul now that the spirit ginseng pill was finished. Instead, he left his cave residence by himself and found a hidden spot on the Dreamcloud Mountains with an enchanting view. He then peacefully sat down and became still.

During this time, he began to appreciate all that had happened throughout his life so far.

When he was young, he had enjoyed life with his loving family and had a little sister that he enjoyed playing with. When he grew somewhat older, he entered the Seven Mysteries Sect under the recommendation of his third uncle, and came to recognize many harsh characters. It was here that he unintentionally came across Doctor Mo and was able to cultivate the Eternal Spring Arts. He then came across the Great South Meeting, introducing him to the true world of Immortal cultivation. Then with Yellow Maple Valley...

Soon after Han Li began to recall his memories, these vague past events gradually became clearer and various emotions began to reveal themselves from Han Li's face as well as a happiness that he had never displayed before. After these three days, Han Li tightly shut his eyes and restored his calm once more. He began to comprehend the Dao of the world in a state of obliviousness.

A month later, Han Li emerged from concealment with his magic power, body, and mind in peak condition. His heart in particular had been tempered to the next level.

With a completely tranquil mind, Han Li returned to the cave residence and enabled all the formations and restrictions present.

He then curtly told Silvermoon, "Guard the outside. Even if a gargantuan matter appears, do not disturb me." With that said, Han Li's azure robes fluttered as he entered a silent room.

The door to the room soon sealed itself with a sparkle of white light and a dense layer of talisman characters. Han Li had placed a restriction on the door to prevent any potential disturbances as he condensed his Nascent Soul.

Although Han Li didn't say what this was about, Silvermoon knew perfectly well what was about to happen. She immediately wore a complicated expression on her face with the emotions of admiration, longing, and resentment contained within them. After finally seeing the silent room remain uneventful for a long while, Silvermoon sighed and left.

Now that she was closely tied together to Han Li, she controlled her thoughts and merely wished for Han Li's success in condensing a Nascent Soul.

Not far away, Mu Peiling was slowly flying near the medicinal garden with an inattentive expression as if her mind was wandering.

Once she thought of her clan's elders requiring her to wed to that man surnamed Yan, she felt that her future prospects were bleak. The Mu Clan elders didn't hesitate on deciding an absurd engagement to marry an unruly woman such as herself to the Yan Clan for a political advantage.

If she were to become a Core Formation cultivator, the clan's so-called elders wouldn't dare to criticize her. Instead, they would treat her with respect. After all, everyone knew what a Core Formation cultivator signified to a clan.

Although this woman possessed a peerless cold elegance, she couldn't help but grit her teeth and grimace when she thought of this matter. She had always been a competitive character and had never revealed her true thoughts. But with her heart wavering as it

was now, it was quite obvious.

Mu Peiling's original plan was acceptable. Since she couldn't oppose her elder's orders, she would delay off the marriage as much as possible. If she could somehow form a core before that, she could dispose of the engagement.

But despite her amazing talents, forming her core in a meager thirty years was basically impossible. Even with her desperate efforts, it would take yet another thirty years before she could reach false core stage and make an attempt to form a core.

While she was happy to take her time, the Mu Clan elders grew impatient and decided to humiliate her, brazenly deciding on the date of her marriage. She was threatened to have her future spirit stones cut off and also mentioned was the possibility of implicating her close family members in the clan.

Once she thought of this, Mu Peiling felt powerless and couldn't muster the slightest effort of resistance.

As for the Drifting Cloud Sect, although she was treated with much favor from her mountain lord and fellow disciples, they were incapable of interfering with these matters as they were tangled in the interests of their own clans and couldn't do anything to help, much to this woman's dejection.

Even more terrible was how the shifted-eyed Senior Martial Brother Yan had somehow acquired information of her recent trip to Dayspring Mountain and bothered her without end. If her magic power wasn't far beyond his own, it was quite possible this Senior Martial Brother Yan would've attempted to forcefully seize her. This had greatly angered this proud woman to nearly release her magic tool and slay him.

But as it so happened, today was the day to pay a visit to various medicinal gardens. She had bluntly rushed to acquire this task and earlier left Dayspring Mountain, avoiding any entanglement from the man surnamed Yan. Han Li's medicinal garden would be the

third garden she was visiting.

Once she thought of Han Li, she felt slightly odd. She initially thought that while he was a Qi Condensation disciple, she felt as if he were something of an unravelable mystery. And once the Sword Trial Assembly occurred, she guessed that he had hidden his true cultivation or identity. As such, she had been particularly mindful of his actions.

But in the past years, he unexpectedly was well-behaved and had done nothing of note. He did little else apart from tending to the medicine garden and chatting with his few friends. This had caused her to become even more interested in him.

While her expression was relaxed when dealing with him, she actually became more mindful of his actions. Unfortunately, Han Li possessed a low-profile and participated very little in the sect. As such, she only encountered him a few times in these many years.

With these twenty years having passed, this woman had finally given up, believing her own guesses to be wild imagination. He was at most a reclusive common disciple. With his poor aptitude, Foundation Establishment would be rather unlikely for him.

Having recalled Han Li, the woman hastened her flight and flew towards his medicinal garden.

Chapter 638: Nascent Soul (2)

When Mu Peiling arrived five kilometers away, she felt an indescribable fear suddenly fall upon her. The spiritual Qi in the air suddenly grew turbulent. In the blink of an eye, countless strands of spiritual Qi transformed into a whirlpool, causing her to nearly fall from the sky on the magic tool, catching her unprepared.

In her great fright, she forcefully circulated all the spiritual Qi in her body to steady her body. She then hastily glanced around and spotted something that left her amazed.

About three hundred meters in the sky, there were countless specks of spiritual light in the air. They were of countless colors, pulsing from bright to dim, and each contained extremely pure spiritual Qi. They were a beautiful sight to behold.

Mu Peiling was overwhelmed and she swept her gaze into the distance. She grew pale at the sight. Wherever she turned her eyes, she merely saw countless specks of light filling the sky without end.

‘Heavens! What is happening?’ Mu Peiling gazed at this strange scene with wide eyes.

In fact, this marvelous spectacle surrounded the entire area within fifty kilometers of Han Li.

As this woman discovered the spiritual Qi transformations, untold numbers of cultivators had also discovered this anomaly. Those with profound cultivations even gazed in astonishment in the direction of the Drifting Cloud Sect thousands of kilometers away.

Although a majority of cultivators hadn’t seen this before, nor did they know why such an omen appeared, the few that knew were watching with feelings of envy and admiration.

On the main peak of the Drifting Cloud Sect, in a cave residence that was located several thousands of kilometers high, there was a silver-haired old man that was sitting cross-legged. He had an ashen complexion and breathed heavily as if he were gravely ill. But in the instant the spirit lights appeared several hundred kilometers away, his forehead trembled and he opened his eyes in shock, wearing an expression of disbelief.

He ceased his cultivation without hesitation and immediately flew out from his cave residence in a streak of white light. A short moment later, the silver-haired old man appeared at the peak of the main mountain, standing on top of a large rock.

He solemnly stared in the direction of Han Li's cave residence and his expression wavered.

At that moment, a streak of yellow light came flying from the sky in the direction of the silver-haired old man's cave residence. But when it caught sight of the silver-haired old man already standing outside of his cave residence, it flew towards the top of the mountain. The light faded away to reveal a middle-aged man with a sallow complexion.

As soon as the middle-aged man appeared, he immediately spoke to the old man with disbelief. "Senior Martial Brother Cheng, you must've felt it. Am I mistaken? Is there truly someone condensing a Nascent Soul within our Drifting Cloud Sect!?"

The silver-haired old man narrowed his eyes and replied without turning his head, "Mistaken? Impossible. We've both experienced this before. There is someone truly condensing a Nascent Soul within our sect. Moreover, they have already reached the final stage and are just about to finish."

The middle-aged man muttered with certainty, "This is baffling! The only late Core Formation cultivators in our sect is Martial Nephew Feng and that spy surnamed Hu. Martial Nephew Feng had spent the last two years striving to reach great perfection

stage. He can't have reached false Nascent stage so soon, let alone form a Nascent Soul. As for the spy from the Heavenly Fiend Sect, his cultivation was already wasted and fell several levels. It can't be him."

"Humph! Of course we know the cultivations of our martial nephews. Although this person may be condensing a Nascent Soul in our Drifting Cloud Sect, he isn't necessarily one of our sect members.. Perhaps he is a daring character who infiltrated into our sect. After all, the spiritual Qi of the Dreamcloud Mountains is rich and abundant, an optimal spot to condense a Nascent Soul."

The middle-aged man frowned and resentfully said, "Senior Martial Brother, what should we do now? It seems he is about to smoothly condense his Nascent Soul."

"That seems to be the case. We should stay here for now. Although I don't know whether or not they have endured the final stage, we would only disturb them if we were to appear. As for the final stage, inner demon backlash, it could take several months or even several years of internal experience to resolve. But in reality, that time actually only passes by in just a moment. Junior Martial Brother Lu, could it be that you've forgotten that you experienced backlash during your Nascent Soul condensation?" The silver-haired man's complexion paled, but his attitude remained calm.

"How could I have possibly forgotten! I never want to think of it again. Inner demon backlash causes one's deepest fears to appear in their heart. If it weren't for the Spirit Tempering Pill I had taken before forming a Nascent Soul, I would've certainly been unable to make it through the pain." The middle-aged man surnamed Lu couldn't help but shudder. His face grimaced when he recalled the experience.

"That's right. This person has yet to endure the final stage and hasn't yet finished a Nascent Soul. There is no point in talking about how we should deal with him. There's no need to rush. But if he is fortunate enough to enter Nascent Soul stage, it would be too

late to block him. Instead of offending him, wouldn't it be better to just calmly observe him and wait for the outcome? Besides, it isn't necessarily a bad thing if this person were to form a Nascent Soul in our Drifting Cloud Sect. Perhaps we would be able to befriend him and have him join our sect!"

The middle-aged man felt his heart stir. "Senior Martial Brother means to say that this person is a vagrant cultivator?"

The silver-haired man smiled and turned to the middle-aged man, "Yes, that is most likely to be the case. If he were from a sect or clan, why would he dare to sneak into our Drifting Cloud Mountains to form a Nascent Soul? It would've been better for him to form a Nascent Soul under the protection of high grade cultivators. Did you remember how seriously the sect treated us when we attempted to form our Nascent Souls?"

Having recalled previous memories, the middle-aged man couldn't help but chuckle, "How could I have forgotten? In the several months it took for me to form a Nascent Soul, the sect sealed off the mountain and were vigilant of attack. Even a sect protecting formation was laid down. From what you've said, it does seem that this person is truly a sectless vagrant cultivator."

The silver-haired old man slowly said, "If this person truly is a vagrant cultivator, we should do our utmost to entice him and not offend him. Since it is much more difficult for a vagrant cultivator to form a Nascent Soul than a sect cultivator, their abilities must be impressive; they cannot be underestimated. Furthermore, this cultivator isn't burdened by a sect, unlike us. He will have fewer misgivings upon acting on grudges than a cultivator who came from a sect. Isn't Eccentric Heavenvenge an example of this? Is it not because of his profound cultivation and superior abilities that we dare not to easily offend him? Does his ruthless and unbridled actions not inspire fear into many of the sects in the Heavenly South Region?"

When the middle-aged man heard this, he silently nodded his

head in agreement.

Then the old man's eyes lit up and he softly shouted, "It's starting!" The middle-aged man was startled and he hastily sent his spiritual sense into the distance.

At that moment, the specks of light surrounding Han Li's cave residence became increasingly numerous, and gradually condensed into a single mass of light across the sky. After a short moment, the sky surrounding him by fifty kilometers began to shine with a layer of dense rainbow light. Loud rolls of lightning surged from the mass of light. Soon, it began to quickly concentrate and gather together at its center, Han Li's cave residence.

Above the small mountain of Han Li's residence, a half-kilometer wide sphere of light glistened brilliantly, blinding anyone who dared to look directly at it.

Suddenly, a world shaking boom clapped through the sky, swaying through the entire mountain. At that moment an azure pillar of light shot towards the sky from the mountain, piercing straight through the sphere of light in the sky.

The huge sphere of light immediately became covered in dark clouds, bringing about a storm of lightning and wind. Within this storm, the light began to shrink, but its colorful flashes of light only became more dazzling.

The cultivators nearby had already rushed close to the small mountain at its center and were observing this astonishing phenomenon in the sky. They each looked at each other in dismay, not knowing what they should do.

Not long after, under the gaze of the astonished bystanders, that huge sphere of light condensed into a translucent, fist-sized ball that contained a fearsome amount of spiritual Qi. Those that observed nearby looked on with amazement, not daring to rashly take any action.

Chapter 639: Nascent Soul (3)

With a light bang, the translucent ball brightly flashed, surrounding itself in a mist of rainbow light that was three meters wide. It quickly flew down and bore into the mountain in an instant. At that same moment, the dark storm clouds up above instantly disappeared, restoring the sky to normal.

This sudden change of events left the surrounding cultivators at a loss.

In the following moments, a series of dragon-like roars cried from the mountains, shaking the very heavens and earth. A three hundred meter tall silhouette of light then emerged from the mountain.

This silhouette sparkled with four-colored light and its limbs were incredibly thick, but because of the radiance that surrounded it, none were able to clearly see its true features. They were merely left with an impression of immense awe, causing the onlookers to turn their gazes away in deference. But most astonishing of all was when the silhouette nodded its head, sweeping two beams of dense light across the cultivators present, causing them to lose their breaths in an instant.

With the sound of several thumps, these cultivators felt their bodies grow heavy and they immediately knelt down. They weren't able to move in the slightest as if Mount Tai itself were pressing down upon them. Although a few of the cultivators with deeper cultivations were able to force themselves to stand, their legs were trembling and the veins on their forehead throbbed. It appeared to take a rather strenuous effort.

As these cultivators became filled with apprehension and inwardly cursed, the huge silhouette smiled and its body suddenly scattered, filling the sky with countless specks of starlight.

This scene has left the observers dumbstruck.

...

Han Li sat cross-legged at the center of the quiet room with his eyes shut. But at the very top of his head, there was foot-tall infant that was amusing itself with his hair.

This infant had delicate skin, an azure barrier of light surrounding its entire body, and a face entirely like Han Li. However, the happy excitement on its face was entirely different from Han Li's usual calm and taciturn manner.

As for Han Li's main body, his complexion was rosy and his expression was serene as if he were soundly asleep.

A short moment later, the infant apparently grew tired from its playing and yawned. With an azure flash of light, it entered through the top of Han Li's head into the body. Han Li's expression then began to stir and his eyelids trembled. They eventually opened to reveal a hidden warmth contained in his bright, clear gaze.

He didn't immediately stand up after awakening. Instead, he wore an expression that contained a trace of wild joy. He extended his palm and began to look across it several times. He then raised his hand and rubbed the top of his head with complete puzzlement.

After the time it took to finish a cup of tea, Han Li's excitement eventually faded away from his face, only to be replaced with his usual calm.

He swept his gaze past the silent room and stretched himself before eventually standing up. He then extended his finger and shot a beam of azure light towards the stone door. With a flash of light, it silently opened.

Having stood guard outside Han Li's room, Silvermoon transformed into the form of a gorgeous young woman upon spotting Han Li. She immediately lowered her head and respectfully saluted him, "Congratulations Master on forming your

Nascent Soul!” Her careful and deliberate attitude somewhat surprised Han Li.

Han Li rubbed his chin and casually said, “Master? It seems that Fellow Daoist Silvermoon now truly recognizes me! However, that was to be expected. Before I formed a Nascent Soul, my cultivation was around the same level as yours. How could you have fully accepted me then?”

With complete respect on her face, Silvermoon said, “Master’s words are true. Now that Master has condensed a Nascent Soul, he has now entered the highest realm in the cultivation world. Your lifespan has been lengthened to over a thousand years, but you’ve only lived around two hundred years so far. With just a bit of luck, I believe it is possible that Master will be able to cultivate to the Deity Transformation stage.

Han Li shook his head and tranquilly said, “It is a bit too early to speak of Deity Transformation stage; it is still so far away.. Most of the Nascent Soul cultivators I’ve met were stuck at early Nascent Soul stage without any way to progress forward. You shouldn’t be too hopeful.”

“Still, I hold much confidence in you, Master.” Silvermoon pursed her lips and sweetly smiled, revealing a particularly alluring charm. Regardless, Han Li still disapproved of her words.

As of current, over a thousand cultivators had gathered nearby. They surrounded the mountain on their magic tools and were whispering to one another. With their inexperience and ignorance, they naturally didn’t know what the recent omen had signified. They could only make a few wild guesses. But from what had just happened, they couldn’t help but reveal giddy excitement.

Naturally, the medicinal garden Han Li was assigned to had attracted quite a bit of attention. The bystanders had already forced their way through the restrictions to take a look. However, they only found it to be an ordinary medicinal garden that didn’t

have a soul in sight.

Mu Peiling were among those that had rushed to the scene. Her expression wavered as she witnessed all that had happened. She had a faint feeling that this fantastical display had something to do with Han Li.

At that moment, several streaks of various colored lights suddenly arrived. The lights faded away to reveal six Core Formation cultivators with heavy expressions. They were headed by the late Core Formation cultivator surnamed Feng. At his side stood a red-robed old man, the beautiful woman surnamed Song, as well as several other unfamiliar cultivators.

Old Man Feng raised his brow at the sight of so many low grade cultivators and icily said, “All disciples, listen well. The area five kilometers away from the mountain has temporarily become a restricted area. If anyone is to violate this, they will be punished severely.”

When the disciples heard their Martial Ancestor give his orders, they could only obey despite the great curiosity they all held and promptly departed.

A Core Formation cultivator with an ordinary appearance suddenly sent a sound transmission to Old Man Feng and pointed to the medicine garden down below. The old man’s expression stirred and he called out to a woman nearby, “Martial Niece Mu, stay behind for now.”

“As you command, Martial Uncle!” The woman was startled for a moment but she immediately flew before the Core Formation cultivators with a respectful expression.

Old Man Feng’s expression relaxed and he said, “Martial Niece Mu, I heard you were in charge of this medicine garden.”

“Yes! This medicine garden is being cared for by a Qi Condensation cultivator by the name of Han Li.”

“Qi Condensation disciple? Where is he now?”

Mu Peiling hesitated for a moment before replying, “I do not know. Several Senior Martial Brothers charged into the medicine garden to take a look, but he was nowhere to be found.”

The red-robed old man’s expression stirred and he asked with surprise, “Han Li? Was it that external affair disciple that made it to the top ten in the last Sword Trial Assembly? The twenty year old youth?”

“Martial Uncle Duan is correct. It is that disciple.” The woman wasn’t surprised that he knew this, given that he had led them to the last Sword Trial Assembly.

“It was truly odd that an external affair disciple was able to make it into the top ten. Could it be the omen of a Nascent Soul formation came from him?” Old Man Feng muttered to himself with a complicated expression. The other Core Formation cultivators wore a solemn expression when they heard him.

The woman surnamed Song had a particularly noticeable shift in her expression. The omen of a Nascent Soul. Could it be this person who formed a Nascent Soul?

While the others had taken it well enough, when Mu Peiling heard his ludicrous words, she felt completely shocked.

The red-robed cultivator slowly said, “Senior Martial Feng, from what has happened, it seems this person had already condensed a Nascent Soul. How should we respond to him?”

“Although they are a newly formed Nascent Soul cultivator, we are by no means their match. I reckon that the two Martial Uncles will soon personally come to deal with this matter. As for now, we must avoid all means of angering him.” Just as he finished uttering his orders, his expression suddenly replaced and he shouted, “Yi! The Martial Uncles have already arrived.”

When the others heard him, they felt relief and turned their

heads towards the sky, spotting two glints of light in the distant skies. The glints of light soon turned into a streak of white and yellow light that approached them.

When Old Man Feng and company saw this, they immediately separated into two rows and wore a respectful expression.

An instant later, the grey-haired old man and the sallow-faced middle-aged man appeared before the Core Formation cultivators, and the old man indifferently said, “This matter may be passed onto us to deal with. You may do as you wish, but don’t remain here.”

When the others heard this, they each acknowledged him and left the vicinity of the stone mountain.

Of course, Mu Peiling didn’t dare to stay behind and hastily flew off after saluting the two Nascent Soul Ancestors. However, she couldn’t help but take one last look at the medicinal garden before she departed.

‘Could it truly be Han Li that had formed a Nascent Soul?’ The woman’s heart grew turbulent at the thought and her expression grew vacant.

At that moment when Silvermoon was speaking with a relaxed expression, the long-winded and aged voice came from the outside, “Congratulations on Fellow Daoist’s successful Nascent Soul Formation. I am the Drifting Cloud Sect’s Cheng Tiankun. Could my Junior Martial Brother and I enter your residence for a chat?”

Chapter 640: Invitation

Han Li momentarily frowned upon hearing the voice transmission.

Han Li calmly ordered, “Silvermoon, release the restrictions and have the two Drifting Cloud Sect Elders enter. I’ll have to speak with them sooner or later. However, do not reveal yourself after releasing the restrictions. While you may be an expert in concealment and illusions as a fox, your demonic Qi has no bearing towards Nascent Soul cultivators.”

“Yes, Master.” Silvermoon respectfully replied and walked out with light steps.

A short moment later, the mountain’s scenery underwent a sudden change. The ordinary, small mountain suddenly revealed itself to be enveloped in large mist of azure light. The mist possessed an imposing aura and contained floating talisman characters. It was clear to be the product of ferocious restrictions.

The two Nascent Soul cultivators glanced at one another and couldn’t help but wryly smile. This vagrant cultivator had placed down such grand spell formations when opening a cave residence in the Drifting Cloud Sect, and they, the sect’s masters, were unable to perceive it in the slightest. It would be a great loss of face when mentioned. At the very least, it was unavoidable to be made fun of by their peers.

At that moment, Han Li’s voice came out from the mist, “I, Han Li, borrowed your esteemed sect’s land to cultivate and had yet to inform you. While my actions were imprudent, I hope you two won’t take offense. Please come in, I will soon release the restrictions. ” His words were spoken with a polite and smooth tone.

The silver-haired old man smiled as if he didn’t take the slightest offense over the matter and said, “Haha! What is Fellow Daoist

saying? It can be seen to be our sect's fortune that you've formed a Nascent Soul here. How could we be offended? We actually came here in such a hurry that we've forgotten to prepare you a congratulatory gift for forming a Nascent Soul. We are somewhat embarrassed."

Han Li calmly replied, "Fellow Daoist is quite funny. I am the one deeply grateful to be able to form a Nascent Soul here." Once this was said, the azure mist intensely trembled several times to reveal a ten meter wide passageway.

Having seen this, the two walked inside without the slightest hesitation, arriving before a stone gate an instant later. The stone gate was wide open and had an azure-robed youth standing before it with a slight smile. He appeared twenty years of age and possessed an ordinary appearance.

"Fellow Daoists, please come in!" Han Li welcomed the two into his cave residence with a smile.

"Sorry to trouble you." The two saluted Han Li before following him inside.

Soon after, the azure mist roiled and the passageway disappeared, restoring the restriction to its original form.

Although the two felt this, they didn't feel worried about this in the slightest since they were still inside the Drifting Cloud Sect, the territory they controlled.

The two followed Han Li through a short passageway before arriving at a large hall.

Once the two were seated, Han Li's spiritual sense stirred, ordering a large ape puppet to walk over to them with a plate carrying three cups of freshly steeped tea. The puppet placed a cup in front of each of the three before leaving. Han Li then said, "Please, have a taste of this spirit tea. I personally refined it."

After giving a word of praise for the tea, the silver-haired old

man stared in the direction that the ape puppet had departed and astonishedly said, “I didn’t expect Fellow Daoist Han to cultivate techniques pertaining to mechanical puppets. This is rarely seen.”

Han Li casually replied, “It’s nothing. I am a mere dabbler and refined a few puppets to control. It isn’t worthy of note underneath your discerning eyes.”

The middle-aged man surnamed Lu was greatly surprised by the puppets and couldn’t help but chuckle, “Hehe! Fellow Daoist Han is too modest. Although the ape was merely a puppet, its spiritual Qi was undoubtedly a match for a mid Foundation Establishment cultivator.”

Han Li shook his head and indifferently said, “It is true that this puppet has the strength to match a mid Foundation Establishment cultivator, but it only has a single method of attack. Additionally, the price of its materials is far too expensive. It is equivalent to the cost of a top grade magic tool.”

“If that’s the case, Fellow Daoist’s puppets should be no small matter. If a low grade cultivator were to carry one on hand, it should be more than enough to protect themselves. However, this puppet technique seems to originate from the Thousand Bamboo School from the far west. Is that where Fellow Daoist comes from?” As the silver-haired old man praised the puppets, he changed the subject to prove Han Li’s origins.

Han Li smiled and narrowed his eyes. He was able to realize his intentions from a single glance. He calmly answered, “The puppet technique came from a nameless record that I acquired. I don’t know whether or not it has anything to do with the far west. However, I am fully aware that the cultivators of the far west are proficient in the Dao of Puppets. I plan on eventually making a trip there to learn of their puppet techniques. As for my origins, I am a genuine cultivator from the Heavenly South. I was born in the State of Yue long ago, but with the invasion of the Devil Dao, I was forced to flee the country.”

After the two exchanged glances, the middle-aged man eventually asked, “So Fellow Daoist Han came from the State of Yue. That is truly surprising. You must’ve cultivated for quite a while, but your appearance is still so young. Could it be an appearance halting effect from a technique?”

While Han Li possessed such a young appearance, one must’ve cultivated at least three hundred years to reach Nascent Soul stage. As for Cultivator Lu, he was nearly four hundred years old once he reached Nascent Soul stage.

“My appearance isn’t due to my cultivation art, but from a lucky encounter where I acquired a face setting pill, persevering my appearance at the time of consumption. As for my time spent cultivating, it should be over two hundred years.”

Cultivator Lu wasn’t particularly surprised to hear about the Face Setting Pill, but when Han Li mentioned his age, he couldn’t help but reveal shock, “What? Two hundred years?”

With a shaken heart, the silver-haired old man couldn’t help but ask, “Fellow Daoist truly cultivated for only two hundred years?”

According to his knowledge, only a sparse few cultivators from the Heavenly South Region were able to condense a Nascent Soul within two hundred years of cultivation, each of them peerless geniuses and world-shaking characters. There were even those who suddenly broke through to Nascent Soul realm only to suddenly disappear and ascending to the realm of legend.

This youth before them, who proclaimed to reach Nascent Soul stage in a mere two hundred years of cultivation, was likely to be able to reach late Nascent Soul stage. He was indeed an important existence.

“What? Is there something wrong from forming a Nascent Soul in two hundred years?” A trace of doubt appeared from Han Li’s eyes. Although he knew that his condensing of a Nascent Soul was much quicker than that of other cultivators, he didn’t know the

hidden meaning that it signified. In the end, Han Li merely knew a few odd pieces of knowledge with regards to Nascent Soul stage. He didn't have the opportunity to familiarize himself with the topic.

The silver-haired old man sighed and revealed a trace of admiration, "It is nothing. We were just immensely shocked at how Fellow Daoist Han formed a Nascent Soul at such a young age. It appears that you have limitless prospects for the future!"

At that moment, he had already decided that regardless of whether or not his words were true, he needed to rope this Nascent Soul cultivator into his sect and avoid a hostile falling out. His entrance to the sect was tantamount.

The middle-aged man surnamed Lu wore a complicated expression, but he soon recovered his calm. After sending a few voice transmissions to each other, the two Nascent Soul cultivators wore a grave expression.

Han Li calmly observed them and didn't reveal any trace of dissatisfaction. Instead, he took the opportunity to sip on the tea in front of him.

Soon, Cultivator Lu and the silver-haired old man finished their discussions. The old man then said, "I hope Brother Han will forgive my presumptuous question, but since Brother Han is a vagrant cultivator, does he have anywhere to go now that he has a Nascent Soul?"

"Anywhere to go? I haven't thought of it. The State of Yue is now in the hands of the Devil Dao, and I've long offended the cultivators of the Ghost Spirit Sect, so that isn't an option. As for other places..." Han Li muttered to himself as he was still pondering about it.

With a serious expression, the silver-haired old man intensely said, "If Fellow Daoists isn't repulsed by our humble Drifting Cloud Sect, then wouldn't it be better to join it? Although our

Drifting Cloud Sect is inferior to the Ancient Sword Sect and to a lesser degree the Hundred Possibilities Pavilion, our sect isn't specialized in any cultivation method. We've never chosen a particular technique to pass on and have developed various different types of techniques over many years. So long as Fellow Daoist enters our sect, you will be on equal footing as us brothers and will not be treated as an outsider." The sincerity contained in his words were obvious to see.

"Become an elder of your esteemed sect?" Han Li unconsciously frowned and revealed a trace of hesitation.

Chapter 641: Heavenvoid Cauldron and the Small Bottle

The silver-haired old man rejoiced upon seeing that Han Li had yet to refuse. Continuing with his earnest tone, he said, “Be at ease, Fellow Daoist Han. Although you will take on the title as one of the sect’s chief elders, you won’t be tied to any trivial responsibilities and may do as you wish. Your mere existence will serve as deterrence. Each year, our sects’ disciples will offer us over a thousand spirit stones that we may use for cultivation. And if there are any spirit medicines or materials that we require in particular, we may order our disciples to find them for us, instead of spending our own time. In short, your status as an elder of our Drifting Cloud Sect will be superior to those in other sects.”

Cultivator Lu slowly added, “Senior Martial Brother speaks true. Although Brother Han has finished condensing a Nascent Soul, he must be puzzled as to how to consolidate it since this must be new to him. We don’t mean to boast, but after spending several hundred years stuck at early Nascent Soul stage, we possess a few unique cultivation experiences. If Fellow Daoist enters our sect, we will be able to provide some guidance.”

The addition of a Nascent Soul cultivator would cause the sect’s power to immediately rise. Although their might still wouldn’t be comparable to the Ancient Sword Sect, they would be on par with the Hundred Possibilities Pavilion, subsequently stabilizing the Drifting Cloud Sect’s position in the Dreamcloud Mountains.

Han Li felt somewhat tempted by Cultivator Lu’s conditions. As someone who had just formed a Nascent Soul, he knew what guidance from those who had condensed a Nascent Soul for hundreds of years signified. It may allow him to save anywhere from tens to a hundred years of bitter cultivation.

As for staying at the Drifting Cloud Sect, it wasn’t as if he hadn’t

considered it, but he had yet to analyze the benefits and drawbacks. Since they had now taken the initiative to mention it, he had no choice to carefully decide.

Would he continue to act as a vagrant cultivator? Seize this opportunity to become a Drifting Cloud Sect elder? Or should he bluntly find a more suitable sect to enter?

After muttering to himself for a long while, Han Li raised his head and said, “Thank you very much for your kind intentions, Fellow Daoists. However, I have just formed a Nascent Soul and my mind is on edge. For something this important, could you two give me a few days to consider it? Three days should be enough to give a reply.”

When they heard Han Li’s words, the two couldn’t help but glance at one another. After a short moment of thought, the old man gave an embarrassed reply, “We are quite ashamed. It seems we were too impatient. It is only natural to require a few days to consider the matter. For now, we’ll turn the surroundings into a forbidden area to avoid our disciples from disturbing you. We’ll come back to pay you a visit in three day’s time.” Once that was said, the two leisurely chatted with Han Li before tactfully taking their leave.

Han Li politely escorted the two out before sitting down once more in the hall. His brow was tightly knitted as if in heavy thought.

White light flashed from outside the hall and Silvermoon gracefully walked into the hall in her fox form.

Han Li glanced at the small fox and curiously asked, “Is your magic power not enough to assume your human form?”

Silvermoon raised her delicate head and dejectedly said, “That is so, Master! My magic power as an artifact spirit along with the spiritual power of the fox can only sustain the human form for a short amount of time. I won’t be able to turn back into human

form until next month.”

“When you truly become a grade eight demon beast, you’ll be able to keep a human form eternally. There is no need to be impatient.”

Silvermoon earnestly said, “Fair enough. I’ve spent countless years in the Heavenvoid Cauldron, what is a few more hundred years? Moreover, with the assistance of master’s medicine pills, I’ll be able to reach that height far earlier than expected!”

Han Li nodded his head but his voice suddenly grew heavy, “Speaking of the Heavenvoid Cauldron, I’ve never asked about it before because my cultivation was lacking. But now that I am a Nascent Soul cultivator, tell me about it. After all, you should know how to open the cauldron given the many years you stayed inside it. Also, I am quite curious about the many other treasures in the cauldron apart from the Heavenmend Pill.”

Silvermoon paused for a moment and sighed, “Of course I know how to open the cauldron. However, I fear that Master will be somewhat disappointed.”

Han Li rubbed his chin and doubtfully said, “Oh! Do you mean that I am still unable to open the cauldron at my current cultivation?”

Silvermoon slowly said, “Originally, the other ancient treasures and I were only able to escape the bindings of the Divine Spirit Treasure because the Celestial Ice Flames surrounding it were disturbed by those in the Hall with master at the time.”

A trace of suspicion flickered from his face and he astonishedly asked, “What are Divine Spirit Treasures? Is the Heavenvoid Cauldron not an ancient treasure? From your tone, there seems to be a close relationship between the Celestial Ice Flames and the Heavenvoid Cauldron.”

Silvermoon explained with a heavy tone. “Divine Spirit Treasures

were what cultivators of the past called ‘ancient treasures’. However, only ancient treasures that possessed amazing abilities were labeled as such, the Heavenvoid Cauldron being among them. Although I don’t know what amazing abilities the cauldron possessed, its might is far beyond that of common ancient treasures. As for the Celestial Ice flames, they are a crucial factor in opening the Heavenvoid Cauldron. No, it is more appropriate to say that they are the first step to controlling the Heavenvoid Cauldron. Master must first refine the flames before being able to do anything else.”

Han Li smiled and asked, “Divine Spirit Treasures? They must be outstanding for even ancient cultivators to put them in high regard. Since refining the flames is only the first step, what else must I do? You may as well tell me all at once.”

Han Li wasn’t upset by this. He clearly understood that many conditions required to use this treasure merely indicated that its power was beyond what he had expected. This matter was a pleasant surprise. So long as he has the Heavenvoid Cauldron in his hands, there will come a day where he will be able to control it. Han Li was certain of this without a doubt.

Silvermoon shook her head and truthfully replied, “I do not know the steps that follow. I only know enough to give Master suggestions after he refines the Celestial Ice Flames.”

“So its like that. Then this will be somewhat troublesome. But even this is fine. I’ll just have to refine the Celestial Ice Flames first and decide what to do later. By the way, you didn’t mention the other treasures that the cauldron contained.” Han Li initially revealed disappointment but he then deeply glanced at Silvermoon.

Fearing that Han Li would be discontent, she hastily explained, “I didn’t mean to hide it. Its just that apart from two more Heavenmend Pills, there are no other treasures; just an empty cauldron. After all, the Heavenvoid Cauldron spent countless years

in Heavenvoid Hall and had a few great cultivators that were able to disturb the Celestial Ice Flames. Each time this occurred, one or two ancient treasures would seize the opportunity to escape. As such, it is natural for the cauldron to grow empty. By the time you'd arrived, there were only the ancient treasures that you spotted."

Han Li didn't reveal the slightest annoyance as if he had already anticipated this. "Since its like that, then so be it. At my current cultivation, common ancient treasures are beneath me. It would be best to be able to make the Heavenvoid Cauldron mine."

Silvermoon chuckled and said, "I am full of admiration towards Master for being able to release me! Master's words aren't wrong. According to what I know, even in times of antiquity, there were only about sixty ancient treasures that were capable of being titled as a spirit treasure. Each and every one seemed capable of vast abilities that could shake the world. In truth, I originally thought that Master's small bottle was a spirit treasure, but after some further thought, I felt it to be unlikely."

Han Li was stunned and doubtfully asked, "Oh? Could it be that my small bottle's abilities aren't enough to be an ancient treasure?"

The small fox licked its lips and solemnly replied, "Of course not. Master's small bottle has the abilities to view the spirit treasures with disdain. After all, no matter how grand the abilities of the spirit treasures, they must still comply with the heavenly laws of this world. Those spirit treasures merely utilize the laws of this world to a greater extend, but that small bottle's ability to age medicine is a truly heaven-defying matter. I reckon that such an item can only be refined once you ascend into the spirit realm or the world above it."

Han Li felt his breath turn cold and he passionately asked, "You mean to say that this bottle could've been a treasure refined by Immortals of a higher realm?"

Silvermoon nodded, “That’s right. It is certainly possible!”

When Han Li heard this, he grew silent and suddenly took out the small bottle from his storage pouch. His expression stirred as he carefully examined it in his hands.

A long while later, Han Li carefully put the bottle away and asked, “Silvermoon, you were listening in the next room. Do you feel that I should stay or find somewhere better?”

Chapter 642: Sect Elder

Silvermoon calmly said, “This... Since Master has personally asked me, I will be blunt. May I ask Master’s plans for the future? If he has no other plans, then staying at the Drifting Cloud Sect isn’t a bad decision. Those two early Nascent Soul cultivators won’t place any restrictions on you if you stay. Furthermore, the Drifting Cloud sect is by no means a small sect. It is able to provide a certain amount of backing for Master. Of course, if Master has other plans, then leave the matter be. None would easily dare to provoke a Nascent Soul cultivator, be they vagrant or not.”

Han Li calmly said, “For the time being, I have no concrete plans, but I must spend the next years consolidating my Nascent Soul. I must also make a trip to the far west and acquire the last three layers for the Great Development Technique. Additionally, I will have to make a trip to the State of Yuanwu eventually. I made a promise long ago to exterminate the Fu Clan in that country. I do not know if they are related to the Hundred Possibilities Pavilion’s Fu Clan.”

After some further thought, Silvermoon proposed, “If that’s the case, Master should remain at the Drifting Cloud Sect. If Master gains guidance from other Nascent Soul cultivators, it will be greatly beneficial to his cultivation. There won’t be much to gain by standing alone.”

“Yes, that’s reasonable to say. I’ve grown tired now. You may withdraw.” Without directly answering Silvermoon proposal, he walked in the direction of his bedroom.

Silvermoon tilted her head as she glanced at Han Li walking away and wore a pensive expression before walking away from the hall.

Lying down on the stone bed in the room, Han Li gazed at the stone ceiling as his mind wandered, finding it difficult to fall asleep. When he recalled the formation of his Nascent Soul, he

grew filled with trepidation. While it appeared that condensing a Nascent Soul was simple, it was actually incredibly dangerous.

When a core is shattered, it causes the entire body's meridians to flow backwards. In truth, it had been painful enough to kill him. But since his cultivation was deeper than those of a similar grade, he was able to bear through it. Of course, the Ninecurl Spirit Ginseng pill was greatly effective during this period, else Han Li suspected he would've fainted.

The shattered core stage was extremely dangerous. However, it paled in comparison to the following stage, inner demon backlash.

With the aid of the Soul Nurturing Wood beads, the Matron Screen Beads, and the other soul protecting treasures, along with the Soul Tempering Pill, he believed he would have a far easier time making it past this stage compared to other Nascent Soul cultivators. However, he didn't expect the ferocious cunning of the inner demon backlash to be several times greater than that of legend.

The inner demons had Han Li experience a string of his deepest fears and hatreds that he buried deep within his heart. During this time, he was incapable of telling that it was an illusion and lived through each of them.

Regardless of whether it be his small native village being ransacked, his family being assaulted, or his own cultivation disappearing, the pursuit of the entire cultivation world from having his bottle revealed, they all stirred up the weaknesses of Han Li's heart. Each of these illusions were as real as could be. Once he fell into them, he had no method of breaking free of them. Despite his calm and unwavering nature, he had nearly lost himself into these illusions from fury and fright.

Fortunately, the Spirit Tempering Pill and the other treasures were well deserving of their name, allowing him to keep his mind clear during crucial moments. Eventually, this led to Han Li finally

breaking free of the illusions, awakening to a body full of cold sweat.

But before he could steady his mind, the inner demons immediately followed up with another attack. While he was still perturbed, he was instead placed into many happier illusions.

He met his father, mother, and little sister once more, living the happy life of when he was child. He saw a beautiful dream where he married Nangong Wan and they became Dao companions. He even had a dream where he had a harem with the Mo Sisters, Chen Qiaoqian as well as several other woman. However, Han Li was able to easily break free of these desires.

Following that, Han Li envisioned himself becoming hegemon of the cultivation world in the Heavenly South Region, eventually ascending to the next world and becoming a true immortal. Such visions continued one after another.

After being enveloped in these illusions for an unknown amount of time, experiencing what seemed to be several lifetimes worth of happiness and grief, he suddenly came to awareness by a stroke of luck and was able to finally escape the entrapment of the inner demons, bringing form to a Nascent Soul.

As Han Li silently recalled this while he laid in bed, he couldn't help but recall the first time his Nascent Soul manifested.

Once his Nascent Soul had formed, it immediately flew out from the top of his head. He clearly felt that the Nascent Soul to be himself, and himself as the Nascent Soul. He was incapable of controlling the actions of the Nascent Soul and could only helplessly observe it playing with his own hair as if it were a true careless infant. At that moment, his mind felt serene and burdenless like all worries had been tossed to the back of his mind and he had become his true self.

After pondering about this in hindsight, he realized what had happened. Because he had just formed a Nascent Soul, he was

incapable of merging it with his mind. Once he consolidated the Nascent Soul and progressed his cultivation, this matter shouldn't reappear in the future.

After restlessly pondering about his experiences forming a Nascent Soul, he eventually closed his eyes and drifted off to sleep. During this moment of rest, a seldom scene reappeared in his mind. He was back at his home village where he was freely rushing through the mountains with his elder brother and little sister. Afterwards, he returned home to eat with his parents and have a nice chat. It was a nice dream.

When the Drifting Cloud Sect Elders returned, Han Li agreed to enter the Drifting Cloud Sect without any reservations.

The two elders were vastly delighted to hear this.

They immediately proposed to call together a majestic celebration within the sect for Han Li's entrance into the sect, inviting even the high grade cultivators of other sects to celebrate.

Once Han Li heard this, he intensely shook his head and flatly declined. He proposed a simpler observance to only to tell the other two sects of his entrance. In any case, he'd come to meet the two sects' Nascent Soul elders eventually. He may as well make a subdued entrance instead of attracting attention to himself.

While the silver-haired old man and Cultivator Lu felt this was improper, they understood Han Li disliked bustling activities and agreed.

Soon after, Han Li followed the two to a hall on the main mountain of the sects' Six Marvelous Peaks. It was there that they summoned all the Core Formation disciples of the sect.

A small portion of them naturally recognized Han Li to be a "Qi Condensation disciple". When they heard of the rumors a few days prior that a newly ascended Nascent Soul cultivator was about to enter their sect, they investigated Han Li's background and came

to a likely conclusion.

But when the time came to see Han Li, they all revealed respectful faces despite whatever complicated emotions they may hold.

Seeing these previous “Martial Ancestors” address him as Martial Uncle Han caused him to inwardly laugh, but his face remained calm as normal. With a wave of his hand, he had them stand, wishing to make things brief and easy.

However, Han Li’s spiritual sense caught a glimpse of the woman surnamed Song wearing a complicated expression when she called him ‘Martial Uncle’. Her voice was even somewhat hesitant. It seemed this woman had misgivings about having found nothing despite the heart reading technique she had employed on him. She naturally couldn’t address the matter given Han Li’s current cultivation.

After he met with the Core formation cultivators, the silver-haired old man promptly displayed a map of the spirit veins of the Dreamcloud Mountains. Han Li was allowed to choose a mountain with abundant spiritual Qi to establish his cave residence. It wasn’t required to be within range of the Drifting Cloud Sect.

Having heard this, Han Li spent the day looking through without any reservations and found a medium-sized mountain in the west of the Drifting Cloud Sect.

Although this mountain wasn’t imposingly lofty nor did it have the best spiritual Qi, it was an interconnected chain of mountains. In addition to the main mountain, it was surrounded by three shorter mountains. It was quite suitable to place down spell formations and restrictions, greatly aligning to Han Li’s desires.

Opening the cave residence was a rather easy matter for Han Li. Despite being the largest cave residence he had yet to carve out, he spent only half a day’s time.

Once Han Li finished establishing his cave residence, Han Li immediately placed down a few formidable spell formations on each of the three peaks, completely enveloping the area of ten kilometers in a fog.

Han Li wasn't particularly satisfied with these spell formations. Han Li decided that once he gained more understanding in the Dao of Formation spells, he would place down even greater formations.

With that done, Han Li returned to his previous cave residence at the medicinal garden and prepared to move everything there. However, there was a graceful figure that was waiting in the medicine garden underneath the mountain.

Once she saw Han Li, she gave a deep curtsy and beseeched Han Li, "Mu Peiling is blind despite having eyes. This Junior hope Senior Han will not take offense at my previous actions. However, I do have a matter that I must request of Senior. Would Senior be willing to take me in as a disciple? I will be certain to serve you throughout my life and remain entirely loyal." Once that was said, this ordinarily proud woman bowed her head and revealed light nervousness from her face, but her eyes shined in anticipation.

Chapter 643: Making Fiction a Reality

Han Li examined the the woman before him and coldly refused her, “I don’t take disciples. And why do you think that I’d accept a Foundation Establishment cultivator? As for your rash actions, I will overlook them on behalf of our past relations. You’re on your own!”

“Senior! I...” When Mu Peiling heard him, her face revealed a trace of panic and she rushed to say something else. However, Han Li brushed aside his sleeve and summoned a gale, swaying and interrupting the woman.

By the time she regained her bearings, Han Li was nowhere to be found. Having seen this, the woman became dispirited and blankly stood in place for a long while. After all, this newly appeared Senior Han was the only choice she had left.

At that moment, Han Li was already back inside his old cave residence. He went straight towards his insect room and withdrew the ten thousand Gold Devouring Beetles. In the past twenty years, his pure Gold Devouring Beetles had evolved once more, nearly shedding all the silver on their shells for gold. Only a few specks of silver still remained on their shells. If he didn’t closely examine them, they would appear completely gold. It was clear that complete maturity for the Gold Devouring Beetles was only a step away. This simultaneously caused Han Li to be excited and somewhat disappointed.

The ferocity of these mostly pure Gold Devouring Beetles had greatly broadened Han Li’s perspective. He pitted over a hundred black-tainted and newly evolved Gold Devouring Beetles against each other. As a result of a few seconds, the black-tainted beetles had nearly been wiped out.

Be it might or tenacity, the newly evolved beetles were far superior to that of the black-tainted beetles. Additionally, the

newly evolved beetles start to emit an ominous, repulsive scent, and their blood-thirst and gluttony had reached a level that was incomparable to before.

He was convinced that if they weren't under the effects of soul control restrictions, they would devour him without any hesitation. Han Li also faintly felt as if his control over them had weakened. If they were to evolve once more, common restrictions would be impotent in the face of their savage nature.

Despite these thoughts, Han Li isolated a group of his largest Gold Devouring Beetles and attempted to have them evolve as quickly as possible so that he could witness the savagery and cruelty of fully mature Gold Devouring Beetles. However, advancing to the next stage took far longer than he anticipated. He feared that without another hundred years, it would be impossible to have them evolve to the last stage. Still, this was acceptable. It gave him time to find a better method to control these beetles.

Having withdrawn his beetles, Han Li walked into the medicinal garden as he continued to ponder. He then carefully put away the Ninecurl Spirit Ginseng and the nearly grown Spirit Well Tree.

Although the Ninecurl Spirit Ginseng had been greatly weakened from its use in the medicine pill, Han Li could easily restore it with the green liquid and so he kept it in his possession.

As for the Spirit Well Tree, he had matured it over the span of many years. The day it would start to produce Wine Nectar wasn't far off. Han Li was looking forward to the abilities he would be granted from cleansing his eyes with large quantities of Brightsight Water.

Apart from the insects and plants in his medicine garden, Han Li had an assortment of other items, but he felt disinterested in collecting them and just left them there.

When Han Li glanced down at the medicine garden from up in the sky, he unintentionally found Mu Peiling down below. She was

gritting her teeth with an expression of helplessness and hadn't noticed Han Li stealthily flying up above.

Han Li lightly shook his head. While handling her issues would be but a trivial effort, he was unwilling to exercise his influence as he had just recently become a chief elder of the Drifting Cloud Sect, not to mention that both the Mu Clan and Yan Clan were large cultivation clans in the State of Xi.

As for his relationship with the woman, it wasn't anything special. It wasn't reason enough to act. In fact, he'd refuse any request from the Drifting Cloud Sect disciples that had recognized him from before.

Han Li truly had no interest in forcefully meddling with the inner affairs of clans.

As such, Han Li silently flew across the Drifting Cloud Sect and arrived in front of his new cave residence. The barrier of mist departed as soon as Han Li appeared and he directly flew into the center of the mountain.

After Han Li placed the insects and plants inside his residence with great familiarity, he placed the matters of the residence into Silvermoon's hands for the time being. He then entered a silent room without hesitation and started to consolidate his Nascent Soul.

During this time, the silver-haired old man and Cultivator Lu both knew that Han Li needed this time to advance in the first step of stabilizing his Nascent Soul. As such, they didn't bother Han Li's cultivation.

A few months later, Han Li was able to smoothly consolidate his Nascent Soul and merge his mind and Nascent Soul as one. If he were to have his Nascent Soul manifest out of his head now, Han Li would be able to easily control its actions.

By the time Han Li left the silent room, Silvermoon had taken the

form of a young woman and was respectfully waiting outside the room. However, when she looked at Han Li, her face wore a strange expression.

Han Li frowned and asked, "It appears that you have something to say to me. What is it?"

Silvermoon smiled with pursed lips and said, "Master, half a month after you entered the silent room, Martial Niece Mu came here and had already sat on top of one of the smaller mountains. She's been waiting there for many days already."

Han Li raised his brow and expressionlessly said, "This woman actually has no sense of propriety. If she wants to wait so much, then let her wait. I'm not one to look for trouble."

"But Master, not long after this woman arrived, I received sound transmission talismans from the Yan Clan and the Mu Clan. Because Master was in seclusion, I've made a duplicate of each of these sound transmission talismans." Silvermoon turned her gaze and probingly asked, "Would Master like to take a look?"

Han Li stroked his chin and indifferently said, "Sound transmission talismans? From the Mu and Yan Clan? Could it have something with that woman named Peiling? Is there a problem from what you heard?"

Silvermoon sweetly smiled, "Hehe! Master has quite the foresight, but there is no need for me to say anything. Master will know as soon as he hears them. There is truly a bit of a problem."

"Take them out." Han Li was disinterested in guessing the meaning behind her words and he extended his hand.

Silvermoon took out a white and a red talisman and handed them over to Han Li with a smile still on her face.

Han Li bluntly grabbed them and had them light up into a ball of flame.

Han Li calmly listened to what the balls of light had to say. A

short moment later, he wore a face of amazement, soon to be replaced with fury.

Once Han Li finished listening to them, his expression sank and he icily said, "Humph! This woman is truly too brave. Does she believe that I will allow her to act so troublesomely because she was my 'Martial Aunt' for a few years?"

Silvermoon attempted to stifle her smile. "She clearly understood that this would offend Master. However, it seems this woman believes that Master isn't a hard-hearted man despite the little contact she had with you. Otherwise, she wouldn't have had the courage to dare to seek protection from you during that day. Besides, even if you punish her, she probably believes it to be a better alternative than becoming the Dao companion of that Senior Martial Brother Yan."

Han Li glanced at Silvermoon with an annoyed glint in his eye and said, "However, she is far too daring. To actually directly tell both clans that I've taken her in as a concubine? Both clan heads have hastily sent sound transmissions expressing their regret. The Yan Clan Head even renounced the marriage, wishing for me to not take any offense for their ignorance. Since this woman dared to act this way, it seems she should be prepared."

Silvermoon blinked with bright eyes and revealed slight amazement, "Master means to..."

Han Li stretched himself and lazily said, "What? Is there anything strange in me accepting a concubine now that I've formed a Nascent Soul? Since this woman is a peerless beauty, I may as well make this fiction a reality and have a taste of what it means to pair cultivate." However, there was a trace of a sneer on his face.

After a moment of confusion, Silvermoon pursed her lips and doubtfully said, "However, Master was never someone to be with a woman, and he had even refused a few advances. Lady Wen for

example. And earlier there was...”

Han Li narrowed his eyes and spoke with a flat voice, “The past was the past. The present is now. My cultivation was far too shallow before I formed a Nascent Soul, and I had no thoughts of seeking the pleasure of a concubine. But if Wen Siyue were to meet me now, I naturally wouldn’t let her go.”

When Silvermoon heard Han Li’s words, she was dumbfounded. It felt as if he were speaking sincerely.

Chapter 644: Thirty Year Agreement

Silvermoon widely opened her eyes and she hesitantly said, “Master, you... you’re serious?”

“You’ll come to know whether or not my words hold true. For now, call that woman in for me. At her current cultivation, she shouldn’t be able to see through your human form.” Han Li casually commanded.

Regardless of her suspicions, she respectfully replied, “As you bid, Master!” Han Li then turned around and entered the large hall.

After the time it took to finish a cup of tea, Silvermoon gracefully entered the hall with a haggard Mu Peiling. It seemed that this short time had been quite stressful for her.

Silvermoon glanced at Han Li and respectfully said, “Master, Young Lady Mu has arrived.”

Han Li nodded his head and indifferently said, “I am aware. You may leave.”

“This servant is excused!” Silvermoon shot a glance at Mu Peiling and departed from hall with a pursed smile.

“I pay my respects to Senior Han.” After saluting Han Li, she remained helplessly silent as if she were awaiting punishment from Han Li.

Han Li slightly frowned in response to her appearance and he examined her beautiful face.

Without revealing the slightest anger, he calmly said, “You should know why I’ve called you in. You blurted out words to those cultivation clans that gave them a domineering impression of me. After all, seizing an engaged woman as a concubine can’t be something that is easily taken. Of course at my current cultivation, the Mu and Yan Clan wouldn’t dare to complain, nor do I hold

them in much esteem. However, this doesn't mean that I will tolerate your presumptuous actions. You should realize I will punish you.”

The woman raised her head and spoke with a pale complexion, “Please forgive me Senior. This woman has truly been reckless. But rather than wed into the Yan Clan, Junior would find it preferable to become Senior’s concubine.”

Han Li’s gaze flickered and he snorted before slowly continuing, “Since you said that you were to be my concubine, I can no longer stay uninvolved, nor can I make clear that this is untrue. Otherwise, these cultivation clans will recognize me, this new Drifting Cloud Sect Elder, to be weak and feeble, incapable of protecting even a Foundation Establishment woman underneath him. And these rumors should’ve already spread throughout the cultivation world as well. So tell me, how should I deal with you?”

Mu Peiling bit her lips and softly said, “Junior has nothing to say. I will have no complaints in how Senior will punish me.”

“Since cultivators on the outside know you to be my concubine, I will give you two choices. The first is to pretend to be my concubine, but you will actually be my servant and obey my orders. After you’ve served me for twenty years, the matter should’ve faded and I will let you free. However, you had best avoid any thoughts that I will assist with the cultivation of a servant girl.”

When Mu Peiling heard this, she revealed a trace of disappointment and raised her head, asking, “Then, what is the second choice?”

Han Li stared at the woman and calmly said, “The second option is make this fiction a reality, to become my concubine in truth. You will attend to me through your life. I will not treat my own spouse pettily and will guide you in your cultivation if my mood is willing. However, I must first tell you that if you wish to become

my concubine, I will place a soul restriction on you to prevent any possible betrayal. After all, if you were to suddenly changed your mind, my secrets could possibly be laid bare.”

“I...” Mu Peiling grew distracted upon hearing him and her expression fluttered as if she were deeply considering Han Li’s thoughts. It seems this woman didn’t greatly oppose the thought of marrying Han Li.

Han Li indifferently said, “I know that you’ve always been proud. Even a Nascent Soul cultivator such as myself isn’t your ideal husband. However, this doesn’t matter. Fellow Daoist Mu isn’t my ideal Dao companion either, but this won’t stop me from taking you in as a concubine. If you obtain my protection, you will tread farther on the path of cultivation without much cost.

And in these past few years, you’ve come to know that I’m not a brutal or craven eccentric. Even if I place down a restriction on your soul, I won’t mistreat you or cause you hardship. And later on, I may even grow to trust you and remove those restrictions. It either will be this, or acting as my servant for twenty years! Those years as a servant shouldn’t pass by too slowly.” His eyes moved away from her as if he didn’t mind what she chose.

Mu Peiling’s heart grew turbulent. While she was unwilling to be controlled by another, the assistance and guidance of a Nascent Soul cultivator was also hard to pass. Unable to come to a decision, she hesitantly said, “Senior, could I have two days to consider this?”

As for becoming Han Li’s concubine, she already knew what Han Li had described; it couldn’t be said to be a bad decision in the slightest. Countless beautiful, young Foundation Establishment women would be tempted to take the offer of becoming the concubine of a Nascent Soul cultivator.

Without any intention of making it difficult for her, Han Li leniently nodded his head, “You may. Come back after two days

with your answer. It should be enough time for you to come to a decision.” He then called for Silvermoon to take her out.

After saluting, Mu Peiling followed Silvermoon’s lead and absentmindedly left the hall.

A short moment later, Silvermoon gracefully walked back inside.

Silvermoon’s bright eyes flickered and she mysteriously smiled, “Master, the two conditions you raised are somewhat...”

Han Li glanced at Silvermoon and said, “What? Do you think they’re too harsh? Don’t they align with her wishes?”

Silvermoon sighed and softly said, “It isn’t about harshness. It’s merely that this woman possesses an unyielding heart. With her pride, it would be difficult for her to choose either option. But if Master truly accepts this girl, then a soul restriction is undoubtedly necessary considering his many secrets.”

Han Li attentively took measure of Silvermoon and spoke with slight surprise, “You seem to have quite a favorable impression of her.”

Silvermoon was momentarily surprised before wryly smiling, “That isn’t it. It’s just that her staunch character gives me a familiar feeling. It seemed in the past that I had a close relationship to someone with a similar nature. I’ve unconsciously grown concerned with her.”

Han Li nodded his head and didn’t pursue the matter any further.

Silvermoon tactfully avoided mentioning Mu Peiling and instead discussed the matter of refining the Celestial Ice Flames, Han Li’s most pressing matter.

Two days later, Mu Peiling arrived once more and she was led into the main hall by Silvermoon.

Han Li glanced at the woman and bluntly asked, “So, you

should've already come to a decision. Will you be my servant for twenty years or will I be placing a soul restriction on you?"

It was clear the woman had made up her mind. She took a quick breath and calmly said, "I've already decided. In the cultivation world, it could be considered destiny for a low grade female cultivator to be given an opportunity to become the concubine of a Nascent Soul cultivator. However, I hope Senior will make a promise before I become his concubine. So long as this condition is met, I am willing to be restricted by your spiritual sense and spend the rest of my life under you."

"A condition? Go ahead and speak." Han Li's face remained unchanged as if he had already anticipated this.

"I know Senior Han isn't a hasty character. As such, I hope that Senior will pledge to hold off for thirty years before he takes my vital yin. I am currently at a crucial point in my cultivation and wish to see whether or not I can form a core within thirty years. It is extremely important for my cultivation art that I remain a virgin. It was for this reason that I was unwilling to be married. Regardless of whether or not I form my core within this time, Senior may pair cultivate with me once time has passed." Perhaps thinking that the conditions were too harsh or that speaking of the matter of pair cultivation was embarrassing, her face blushed after this was all said, revealing a captivating expression.

"Thirty years? Haha! That's fine. I can agree to your condition." Once Han Li heard this, his eyes brightly flickered and he instantly agreed.

Mu Peiling was amazed that Han Li had so quickly agreed, but she soon recovered and joyfully said, "Many thanks to Senior!"

After pondering for a moment, Han Li said, "In two days, I will officially notify the other two elders of the sect that I've taken you in as a concubine. But since it will be thirty years before we actually pair cultivate, I will open a smaller separate cave residence

for your cultivation among one of the other three mountains. Of course if I have the time, I will go over and give you some guidance.”

“Yes, as you wish.” Mu Peiling was clearly very satisfied with these results and approved without thought.

Han Li’s expression relaxed and he mysteriously smiled, “As my future concubine, there is no need to always address me as Senior. You may just call me Sir. I am only two hundred years old, and am quite young considering my lifespan is now over a thousand years.” Han Li then sized up the beautiful woman without any restraint, clearly appreciating the view.

Chapter 645: Copulative Essence Arts

Mu Peiling blushed and softly said, “As you bid, Sir!”

Han Li withdrew his wanton gaze from her body. He took a purple jade medallion out from his robes and placed it on the table. He said with a cold voice, “Return and handle your affairs. Pick a mountain for your cave residence as well. This is a restriction medallion for the surrounding formations. If you wear it on your person, you will be able to leave my spell formations as you please. Once everything is prepared, I will place down a soul restriction on you and have you officially become my concubine, but let's get the ugly talk out of the way first. I don't care if you have an ideal husband or a beloved. Cleanly sever ties with them; you are my concubine now. If you still have feelings of longing for them and still possess relations with them, don't blame me for being ruthless. Now is the time to withdraw if you still possess any second thoughts.”

“Since I was small, I've dedicated myself to walking the path of immortal cultivation. How could I have a beloved? Besides, I have steeled my resolve. I won't back down when the matter has already been decided.” Without a further thought, the woman nimbly took the jade medallion.

Han Li nodded his head and said no further. Soon after, he summoned a huge ape puppet and had it guide Mu Peiling outside.

Mu Peiling revealed a trace of surprise upon seeing the puppet. The puppet fearsomely held a level of spiritual Qi similar to her own. She was also puzzled as to why the white-clothed woman wasn't there as well.

However, she knew that it was best to avoid probing too deeply and obediently kept quiet, following the puppet out from the cave residence.

Once the woman left, a white fox walked out from what appeared

to be an empty corner of the room. “Since Master planned on taking this woman as a concubine for her punishment, why did you agree to wait thirty years? Could it be you have other plans?”

Han Li calmly admitted, “Of course I do. To tell the truth, I have no plans to touch her before she reaches Core Formation.”

Silvermoon hopped onto the table in front of Han Li and gazed at Han Li in a puzzled manner, “Huh? Why might that be?”

When Han Li saw her adorable appearance, he couldn’t help but smile. He took out a pink jade talisman from his waist and placed it on the table.

“Do you recall the storage pouch I looted off the disciple of Archsaint Six Paths? This jade slip was in his storage pouch. It contains many Devil Dao pair cultivation arts.”

Silvermoon looked at the jade slip and then glanced at Han Li with a trace of suspicion. Since Han Li took this out, she knew that Han Li would continue his explanation.

As expected, Han Li lightly stoked the pink jade slip with his finger and unhurriedly said, “There are many secret techniques contained inside this jade talisman. Although they are more powerful than ordinary pair cultivation techniques, the difference can’t be considered much. However, there were two secret techniques among them that were particularly exceptional. One of them, the Dragon Guiding Arts, are particularly suitable for Core Formation males, allowing a Core Formation cultivator to unceasingly draw on the vital Yin essence of a woman with a special constitution, greatly raising their cultivation.

“However, this secret technique was certain to cause great harm to the woman’s origin Qi. As such, any male cultivators using this technique would best have many concubines. Considering the many Foundation Establishment women at Archsaint Six Paths’ disciple’s side, he should’ve cultivated this technique. Otherwise, there would be no way he could’ve cultivated to late Core

Formation stage at his young age, no matter how amazing his aptitude. After all, he didn't have a miraculous bottle that could age plants.

“As for the other technique, the Copulative Essence Arts, its a secret pair cultivation technique that is specialized for Nascent Soul men. Unlike the Dragon Guiding Arts, it requires a woman to possess cultivation at Core Formation stage. Once a woman cultivates this technique to a deep enough stage, the male cultivator would be able to forcefully break through a cultivation bottleneck in an instant by seizing her vital Yin. It is only natural that I wish for this woman to cultivate with all her might. This technique requires a woman possessing deep cultivation after all.”

“Dragon Guiding Arts! Copulative Essence Arts! Isn't it an exaggeration for a pair cultivation technique to be so fearsome?!” The small fox blinked and revealed disbelief.

Han Li sighed and said, “I had similar thoughts to you at the beginning, for a pair cultivation technique to be so fearsome; its simply unprecedented. However, I discovered the name of the person who established these pair cultivation techniques inside the jade slip, and my doubts were immediately dispelled.”

Silvermoon seemed to have thought of something and couldn't help but softly shout, “Yi! Could it be...”

Han Li said with a deep voice, “That's right! These two pair cultivation techniques were personally established by Archsaint Six Paths. Since he is a late Nascent Soul cultivator and is renowned as the number one figure in the Scattered Star Sea's Devil Dao, these two techniques should be greatly effective. Otherwise, Archsaint Six Paths' disciple couldn't have kept it so closely on his person.”

Silvermoon tilted her furry head and hesitantly asked, “So Master plans on using this woman to cultivate...”

“That's right. Once this woman reaches late Core Formation

stage, we will both cultivate the Copulative Essence Arts. And once I reach a bottleneck, I will use this technique to breakthrough it. After all, there are few medicine pills that are capable of assisting in the cultivation of a Nascent Soul cultivator. From now on, my cultivation speed will be pathetically slow. Since a vast majority of Nascent Soul cultivators are stuck at the early stage, it can be observed that it is extremely difficult to breakthrough the bottleneck to mid Nascent Soul stage. As such, I must make an attempt, regardless of the validity of the technique's effects.

“It is only a pity that according to what was described, the bottleneck breakthrough will only occur for the first time the technique is used. It will have no such effect afterwards. Of course, this technique also benefits the woman involved as well, but not nearly to the extent of the male cultivator. Tell me, did you think that I truly thought I acquired a concubine merely because I could?” Han Li glanced at the white fox at the side and coldly smiled.

Silvermoon appeared to sigh with relief and smiled, “At first, I did! I had thought that Master has grown proud after forming a Nascent Soul and thought to take in a concubine as a result.”

When Han Li heard this, he wore a vague expression. He then expressionlessly said, “Although I will place the woman underneath a soul restriction, it is better that she doesn't learn of all the secrets in the cave residence. I will be able to control this woman's very life, but I cannot control her thoughts. Just because I treat her well doesn't necessarily mean she will be grateful. I will first treat her with great caution so I may avoid being betrayed from a moment of carelessness.

“This ‘Martial Aunt’ Mu is rather intelligent, but it would be best to keep watch of her. If she truly wishes to follow me and is unswayed by the wills of others, I will not treat her unfairly and will assist in her cultivation. After all, I have an abundance of low grade medicine pills. Silvermoon, keep an eye on her for me when

you're free. It should be a trivial effort given your skills."

Silvermoon obediently agreed, "Yes, Master! When you are in secluded cultivation, I will particularly pay attention to her."

"That will do. These thirty years should be enough for me to read her. I hope she doesn't disappoint me!" During that final sentence, Han Li's tone became sullen.

Several days later, Mu Peiling returned to the mountain and was subjected to a soul restriction by Han Li. Afterwards, she was gifted with a few bottles of medicine pills effective for Foundation Establishment cultivators. This gift had amazed her and caused her face to blossom with beauty from her delight. She eagerly expressed her thanks with adoring respect. It appeared this woman had truly thought of herself as his concubine.

After the silver-haired old man and Cultivator Lu were notified that Han Li had taken her in as a concubine, they expressed their congratulations and each gifted a top grade magic tool to Mu Peiling.

Han Li smiled in response and politely thanked them.

From then on, Mu Peiling began to dedicatedly cultivate at one of the smaller mountains surrounding the main cave residence, provided both with Han Li's guidance and medicine pills.

During this time, Han Li would occasionally pay a visit to the cave residences of the other two Nascent Soul cultivators in the sect, humbly asking for cultivation instruction. Since the two Drifting Cloud elders intended to sincerely accept Han Li into their fold, they hid nothing from him, much to Han Li's benefit. In hindsight, Han Li felt his choice to stay was extremely wise.

Several months later, Han Li was delighted to discover the Spirit Well Tree in the medicine garden started to shed Wine Nectar. He hastily began to refine the Brightsight Water according to the instructions that the dishevel-haired cultivator left behind.

With Han Li's grandmaster-level skills in medicine pill refinement, he quickly grasped the knack of refining the spirit water and found it easy to concoct despite his first few failed attempts.

Currently inside the pill refinement room, Han Li was holding onto a small bottle of Brightsight Water that he concocted earlier. His gaze flickered when something suddenly came to mind, and his expression soon became determined. He opened the bottle with one hand and caused his hand to flash with azure light in the other. A ball of translucent blue liquid flew out from the bottle and slowly made its way towards Han Li's forehead.

By the time the water arrived in front of Han Li's forehead, it suddenly stopped and became completely still.

Han Li looked at the water with narrowed eyes and remained silent. A short moment later, he opened his mouth and breathed out a small mist of azure light and enveloped the water. Then as the water sparkled, two fine strands of water suddenly shot out and entered Han Li's eyes.

Han Li felt his eyes warm up, but a moment later, the warmth turned into a bone-chilling cold. He shut his eyes and trembled from the sensation.

Chapter 646: Aureate Sword Formation

[TL Note: The Swordshadow Phantasm Technique is now known as the Swordlight Reflection Technique.]

Han Li meditated without any further thought and began to circulate the Qi into his body. The icy sensation in his eyes only grew stronger.

If anyone were standing in front of Han Li at that moment, they would've discovered that a layer of blue light began to weakly cover his eyes.

An hour later, the icy sensation gradually faded away from his eyes and Han Li deeply sighed. His eyelids trembled for a moment before they opened. He unconsciously glanced around with a trace of doubt on his face.

Han Li glance around and muttered to himself, "It doesn't seem that anything has changed. Could it be ineffective?"

But after a moment more of thought, he suddenly poured spiritual power into his eyes and deeply glanced around. A blue light sparkled from deep within his eyes.

"Yi!" Han Li couldn't help but shout out. He was able to see the restrictions in the silent room, and his eyes were stained light blue. However, his focus was disrupted from his surprise and the scene before him returned to normal.

Han Li glanced at the ball of spirit water still floating in front of him and thought, 'It was no wonder that cultivators at Core Formation stage and beyond hold no interest in Brightsight Water. This meager ability to barely see through anything is to little effect. There are many supplementary magic techniques that could achieve a far stronger effect. However, this is only the result of cleansing the eyes one time. If I were to periodically use the Brightsight Water, perhaps my eyes would gain a miraculous

ability. I'm looking forward to it."

Without any reservations, Han Li used the remaining Brightsight water to repeatedly cleanse his eyes. This amount of spirit water was enough for over ten cultivators to cleanse their eyes once through, but with Han Li's profound cultivation, he was able to consume all of it after only a few times.

Once the spirit water was completely consumed, Han Li still observed no changes. It was only when he focused spiritual power into his eyes that blue light suddenly appeared within them. It's ability to see through restrictions wasn't particularly improved. As Han Li had plenty of time, he wasn't dejected by these results. It would just be a gradual process.

On the second day, Han Li had a quick word with Silvermoon before he entered seclusion and took out the golden page that recorded the Azure Essence Sword Arts.

This sword art was a complete set, containing thirteen layers. The divine abilities of the sword art included the Azure Essence Swordstreaks, the protective sword shield, and the Swordlight Reflection Technique.

The first two techniques weren't particularly notable. Although they were easy to use, their power was nothing special. As for the Swordlight Reflection Technique, Han Li was greatly satisfied by it.

He made use of that divine ability to great and immediate effect, bringing many battles to a sudden conclusion. However, because his opponents had been truly too powerful, the might of this sword art wasn't well displayed. He was confident that any common cultivator with similar cultivation to his own would be incapable of blocking several hundred of swordlights that surrounded them. They would be skewered in an instant.

As of current, he had already cultivated to the tenth layer of the sword art and could now make use of the sword art's new divine

ability. It had been quite laughable. He had already acquired the entirety of the Azure Essence Sword Arts from the golden page [1], but the final passage containing the last divine ability had been obscured from him at the time, perhaps by intention of the page's creator.

Although he clearly knew that the words of light had contained the cultivation method for the final divine ability, his cultivation had been too shallow at the time. Even when he was at late Core Formation stage, he was still incapable of reading the divine ability.

When Han Li was first given the cultivation incantations for the thirteen layers, he found the incantations for a realm higher than his own to be incomprehensibly profound. Despite reading through it several times, Han Li wasn't able to comprehend a lick of them, let alone be able to cultivate them. It seemed he'd have to be a stage from Deity Transformation stage before finally being able to comprehend the divine ability that was hidden.

At the time, Han Li wasn't flustered by this. Due to fear of sect disciples overreaching their limits in the pursuit of greater power, it was common practice in the cultivation world to subject inheritances under cultivation restrictions. Han Li clearly understood that when his cultivation was at a great enough level, he would come to understand the cultivation method of the divine ability eventually.

Now that he had reached Nascent Soul stage, reading the passage for the divine ability should pose no problem.

With that thought, Han Li flung the golden page into the air and spat out a mist of azure light from his mouth, blowing the golden page into the air like a feather. He then began to flick his finger with a calm expression, repeatedly striking the golden mist with Azure Essence Swordstreaks. Each glint of light was cleanly absorbed by it.

With Han Li's current profound spiritual power, it had been far quicker to react than when he was at Foundation Establishment stage. A short moment later, the golden page absorbed enough essence and began to flourish with golden light. Strings of ant-sized characters began to continuously appear on the page.

When Han Li saw this, he extended his hand towards the floating golden page without any hesitation and it flew into his grasp with a woosh. Suddenly, dense lines of light characters rushed towards Han Li's head.

Han Li accepted the string of words with a calm expression. As a result, he was now able to clearly see the previously obscure portion of the Azure Essence Sword Arts.

Without any further thought, he put away the golden page and immediately closed his eyes, examining the new acquired divine ability.

“The Aureate Sword Formation! What is this? Could it be related to spell formations?” Han Li merely thought to read through the information, but the words Aureate Sword Formation immediately appeared in his mind in huge golden characters. He couldn't help but be astonished.

The faintly gold characters of light began to appear within his spiritual sense and he began to comprehend the incantations. He sat still in a cross-legged manner as three days unknowingly passed.

During this time, Han Li's face wore an assortment of varying expressions from excitement to misery. Even dense beads of sweat would occasionally form on his brow. When the end of the third day arrived, Han Li became calm once more. He sighed with a gloomy expression, opening his eyes to reveal deep thought

He pursed his lips and muttered with an odd expression, “This sword formation could only be described as outrageous. Even if I only received a third of its described power upon cultivating it to

completion, I would be able to travel anywhere throughout the Heavenly South Region without hindrance.”

Han Li muttered as he continued to ponder, “However, being able to use this ability isn’t a matter of a few years. I will need to use at least a hundred sword lights if I am able to use this ability. It was no wonder the two golden pages fundamentally served as one. With one detailing the incantations and the other describing the Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords, they are lacking without the other. I reckon the Swordlight Reflection Technique was founded for the sword formation. Otherwise, the formation wouldn’t have been possible.”

Of course, the more powerful the flying swords and the greater the number of swordlights, the more powerful the sword formation.

Han Li reckoned that with enough time he would be able to produce four swordlight reflections from each of the seventy-two Cloudswarm Swords, forming a grand sword formation of three hundred sixty swordlights. If any mid Nascent Soul cultivators fell into the formation, they would be incapable of escaping unharmed, if they managed to survive. Additionally, once his own cultivation progressed, he would be able to create even more swordlights, enabling him to slay even late Nascent Soul cultivators. But in addition to acquiring enough swordlights to establish a formation, he must use this divine ability to refine his Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords once more, requiring a material known as Auric Essence.

This material wasn’t unknown to Han Li as it was known by an extremely famous name in the cultivation world as Honed Gold. It was a rarely seen treasure on par with Han Li’s piece of refined crystal he had acquired from those Ironfire Ants. However, some would say the Auric Essence was far more valuable.

So long as a small piece of Auric Essence was used to temper a blade type magic treasure, its incisiveness would be increased

several times over. To sword or saber cultivators, this was a matter of life and death.

However, this was quite troublesome from Han Li. Even if a single sword required a small amount of Auric Essence, it was an astonishing amount when multiplied by seventy-two. Where would Han Li find such a large amount of Honed Gold?

After all, as soon Auric Essence was discovered, it would either be applied to one's own magic treasure or would immediately be exchanged for needed items. It would quickly be used one way or another. Let alone the Heavenly South Region, this treasured material hardly ever appeared in the abundantly wealthy Scattered Star Seas. It would be impossible for him to trade for this precious stone.

As of current, the astonishing might of this Aureate Sword Formation was fundamentally unobtainable, like flowery mist or the reflection of the moon in water.

After further thought in the silent room, Han Li could only bitterly chuckle and set aside the matter for the time being. He then took out a jade box from his storage pouch and opened it to reveal a lustrous ball of golden light. Rolls of thunder faintly clapped as soon as it appeared.

“Celestial Ice Flames!”

When he glanced at this precious treasure, Han Li's expression grew sullen. With his current cultivation, he could now make an attempt to refine the flames. If he could successfully refine this icy flame, he could very likely acquire the Heavenvoid Cauldron.

[1] In Chapter 241, Han Li acquired the complete Sword Essence Sword Arts from the golden page's words of light.

Chapter 647: Setting off on a Journey

Since the Celestial Ice Flames would allow him to easily exterminate Nascent Soul cultivators, Han Li didn't dare to be careless. He possessed several techniques for refining devilfire, but he ended up choosing one of the secret techniques contained in the Profound Yin Arts as he felt it to be the reliable.

Having decided, Han Li attentively stared at the golden ball of lightning for a moment and extended his finger towards it. With a crackle, a fine sliver of lightning suddenly arced from his finger and shot towards the golden ball. Suddenly, the golden ball trembled several times before being dragged into the air by the sliver of lightning. It brightly shined as it floated.

Han Li then sat down underneath it and raised his head to look at it with narrowed eyes. At that point, he began to form a series of complicated incantation gestures with his hands.

With rolls of thunder, dense arcs of golden lightning began to flicker and form an impenetrable net of lightning surrounding the ball. Once the ball of lightning was surrounded by a large net of lightning, the scene grew still.

At that moment, Han Li sighed and his spiritual sense stirred, connecting with the shell of Divine Devilbane Lightning surrounding the Celestial Ice Flames. Thunderous bellows reverberated throughout the room and the golden sphere grew dazzling. Fine arcs of lightning began to repeatedly shoot out from the golden sphere and its bindings relaxed, revealing a deep blue, translucent pearl underneath. It was continuously spinning.

Han Li held his breath upon seeing the Celestial Ice Pearl. Having personally witnessed its power, fear of it still lingered in his heart.

With the ice pearl's appearance, Han Li spat out an azure flying sword from his mouth without further thought and momentarily pressed his hands together. A dense bolt of lightning suddenly shot

out from his hands, simultaneously striking the ice pearl in an overbearing attack alongside the flying sword.

The pearl cracked open with a boom. With a pulse of light, the sphere turned into a unstable sphere of blue flames. The sphere of flames then expanded before condensing into a fist-sized blue flower. Each of its petals glistened as the flower slowly blossomed.

Simultaneously, a layer of blue frost began to spread throughout the walls, enveloping the entire room in a realm of freezing ice in the blink of an eye.

However, Han Li had long prepared for this. Although a solemn expression appeared on his face, he remained calm and a dense layer of blue light securely protected his body. With his Nascent Soul cultivation, he was able to completely protect himself from the assault of the icy flames, fearsome as they may be.

Han Li felt somewhat relieved to see that the icy Qi was unable to penetrate the light barrier protecting his body and proceeded to point into the air. The net of Divine Devilbane Lightning immediately shrunk back and enveloped the blue flower of light. Underneath the golden sparkling light and blue radiance, the huge blue flower began to change once more into a flame attempting its utmost to resist the lightning net's constriction.

Seeing that the Celestial Ice Flames were restricted, Han Li took a deep breath and began to move his spiritual sense. Claps of thunder rang out as a small hole opened from the golden net, only to be mended a moment later. But in that short instance, a sliver of blue flame escaped and shot towards Han Li as if it were intelligent.

Han Li expressionlessly clasped his hands in an incantation in response and he closed his eyes. azure Qi began to flow out from the crown of his head, followed by the emergence of an inch-tall Nascent Soul.

The Nascent Soul's face was strained. As soon as it appeared, it

stared at the incoming wisp of blue flame and it twisted its chubby arms, releasing two streaks of blinding azure light. At that same moment, it opened its mouth and spat out a fist-sized ball of light, resulting in three masses of azure light to meet the wisp of blue flame.

The azure and blue flame clashed, but the blue flame was instantly enveloped by the azure light. Despite its struggle, the flame was truly too small and was easily overwhelmed. However, even as the flame wisp was trapped, it slowly dissipated the light.

When the Nascent Soul saw the flame being successfully contained, a smile appeared on its face and beckoned to the azure light, bringing the flame wisp closer to it.

After revealing a trace of hesitation and fear, the Nascent Soul eye's brightly glinted and grasped onto the azure light, shoving it down its mouth alongside the wisp of blue flame it contained.

Shortly after, azure light flashed from its body and the Nascent Soul disappeared into mist as it flew back into Han Li's head.

Han Li's eyelids trembled several times in response, but his expression unchanged as if he were sleeping. However, his Nascent Soul sat cross-legged inside his Dantian wearing a solemn expression. Its hands were forming an incantation gesture.

...

Half a year later, Han Li emerged from the silent room with a gloomy expression.

The Celestial Ice Flames were truly ferocious. Although he had attempted to refine only a sliver of flame, it had taken half a year of hard effort. However, due to the flame's extreme coldness, he would need to nurture it inside his body for an additional year before he could truly control it. In order to prevent any mishap, he couldn't refine any more of the Celestial Ice Flames during this time. As for the Heavenvoid Cauldron, he refined far too little of

the Celestial Ice Flames to even think of attempting the next step.

The reason why Han Li left seclusion now instead of continued cultivation was in preparation to meet the silver-haired old man and Cultivator Lu. He wished to see if either of them had any news with regards to Auric Essence. Additionally, he planned on bidding farewell to the Drifting Cloud Sect for some time. During his travels, he would pay a trip to the State of Yuan Wu in order to fulfill his promise with Xin Ruyin [1]. At his current cultivation, exterminating a cultivation clan should only be a trivial effort.

As for the Fu Clan in the Hundred Possibilities Sect and the State of Yuan Wu, they did share some history together. The Fu Clan in the State of Yuan Wu was a distant branch of the Fu Clan in the Hundred Possibilities Sect.

However, the two clans grew distant over a long period of time and the Fu Clan in the State of Yuanwu had joined the Devil Dao, much to the resentment of the main branch who were part of the Heavenly Dao Alliance. As a result, both sides had cut relations to one another.

Han Li grew greatly relieved from this turn of events. Although the State of Yuan Wu belonged to the Devil Dao, there would be few in that country that would be capable of stopping him.

When Han Li left his cave residence, he visited the side residence in passing and swept his gaze inside the cave residence to discover Mu Peiling strenuously cultivating in seclusion. From the light glistening from her face, it appeared that she had made great progress.

Pleased with her results, Han Li left without disturbing her. He then headed straight towards the main mountain of the Drifting Cloud Sect.

Six hours later, Han Li silently left the cave residence of the silver-haired old man. The old man didn't have any concrete information on any Auric Essence, but he had given him

information that in two years, there would be a grand trade fair taking place in the Nine Nation Union's State of Yu. It was known to be the greatest trade fair to take place in the Heavenly South Region.

Many rare materials would gather there from all around the Heavenly South Region. Even half of the continent's Nascent Soul cultivators would each make a trip there. After all, Nascent Soul cultivators were the ones who most required precious materials. Since common materials and medicines were simply beneath their notice, their only option was to find trade meetings and acquire their rare needs there.

The reason why the trade fair was to be held in the Nine Nations Union was because the Nine Nations Union was considered a neutral power. Due to the threat of the Moulan Spell Warriors, the other three powers had no fear of the Nine Nations Union harboring any wicked schemes. As a result, the cultivators of those three powers had no misgivings participating in the trade fair.

Currently, Han Li could only hope that Auric Essence would appear at trade fair. Otherwise, he couldn't possibly know when he'd be able to use the Aureate Sword Formation. He may even have to pay a visit to the legendary Great Empire of Jin, but that was truly too far away.

After Han Li finished speaking to the silver-haired old man about the Auric Essence, he didn't mention where he wished to go. He only mentioned that he planned on traveling for some time as he just formed his Nascent Soul and that he was taking his leave.

When the silver-haired old man heard him, he wasn't doubtful in the slightest. He merely mentioned the affiliations of each country and the names of a few Nascent Soul cultivators that he must take notice of and never offend. At that moment, Han Li heard the name of this Eccentric Heavenvenge once more.

Han Li was quite curious towards this cultivator and made a note

of him. He then expressed his thanks to the old man and departed.

On the morning of the next day, Han Li carried the most important items in his cave residence on his person and sealed his cave residence off using restrictions. He then departed from the Dreamcloud Mountains, flying in the direction of the State of Yuan Wu.

The Fu Clan in the State of Yuan Wu was once renowned as one of the three great sects in the country. When the Devil Dao invaded over a hundred years ago, this clan hadn't resisted their invasion in the slightest and even provided assistance to the Six Devil Dao Sects. As a result, the Fu Clan hadn't suffered the slightest damage from the invasion; instead, they were given the opportunity to flourish. After overwhelming the other clans in the country, they became the number one clan in the State of Yuan Wu.

Because the Fu Clan had frequently placed many of their disciples into the Devilflame Sect, even giving their clan's gifted women to the Devilflame Sect's upper echelon as concubines, they were considered to be completely subservient to the sect. As a result, the Fu Clan gained the support of the Devilflame Sect, the dominating power over the State of Yuan Wu, and wildly flourished in the past hundred years.

[1] In chapter 352, Han Li made a promise to Xin Ruyin to avenge Qi Yuanxiao's death in exchange for their knowledge on formation spells and tool refinement.

Chapter 648: A Party of Three

The Fu Clan's main stronghold was located deep into a mountain range in the west of Yuan Wu. The mountain range was known as the Purple Road Mountains as a purple mist sealed it off year long. Mortals are never seen again once they tread deep into the mists, and if they stayed too long within it, their throats would swell and their eyes would sting. With prolonged contact, they would even die of poison.

Although locals knew of the dangers of this mist and would well avoid it, there would always be ignorant outsiders who entered, only to perish. The Fu Clan were aware of the mortals dying from the mist, but they hardly batted an eye.

If mortals died, then so be it. The Fu Clan had planned with such great effort to create the Violet Miasma Cloud Formation, requiring them to invite several formation masters to simultaneously work on it. Besides, these mortals could be considered lucky to have died by this formation.

In the past several days, the violet clouds on Purple Road Mountain remained still as always, but a commotion rose from within. Occasionally, cultivators would appear outside the mist and shout something. Afterwards, they would reveal a lustrous red invitation before disappearing into the mist.

The nearest mortal settlement to Purple Road Mountain was a small city named Taihe. This city only spanned five kilometers and its population didn't exceed ten thousand. However, it had all the facilities one would expect from a city such as inns and restaurants.

Ah'er was a waiter at one of the two inns of Taihe City. Although he was only nineteen years of age, he had been a waiter for four years. With his thin body, he stood at the side of the inn's doors and dispiritedly called out to those who walked past by.

This wasn't because Ah'er was being lazy, but because the weather was scorching. After yelling in the hot weather for an entire morning, he no longer had any strength. Even that petty, crafty Innkeeper Liu couldn't say anything in response to his dejected manner. Although he wore a dissatisfied expression, he could only grumble his complaints and gloomily handle his abacus, calculating the dense ledger on the table.

Ah'er glanced at an expanse of white clouds in the sky and inwardly cursed with all his heart. Then after lower his head, he muttered out to the passersby in a manner even he couldn't hear and became even more dejected.

Just as he thought whether or not he could take advantage of Innkeeper Liu's inattention to speak into the kitchen for a few drinks of cold water to relieve himself from the heat, the sky suddenly dimmed and he felt a chill. Ah'er was surprised and he couldn't help but raise his head to the sky.

But much to his shock, he discovered that three eccentrics had unknowingly appeared before him.

One of the men wore hemp robes and a tall hat. He was short and resembled a large ball. The other was a bald man with piercing eyes. The last of them was a man with long hair draping over his face. His face possessed a sinister air and his eyes were ice-cold.

Having spent so many years as a waiter, Ah'er knew how to act. He immediately smiled and said, "Do you guests wish to stay at this inn?" From his years of many experience, this party were sure to be generous customers despite their fiendish appearance.

The short, plump man glared with his small eyes and casually took out a large piece of silver. He shoved it into the waiter's chest and impatiently said, "Cut the rubbish. Why else would we come at an inn if not to stay there? Prepare a room on the second floor for us, and a table of top-rate food and wine for us as well."

Without waiting for Ah'er's reply, Innkeeper Liu jumped up and

immediately acted like a robust man, leaping out of the gate and taking the silver piece out of Ah'er's hands. With a ingratiating expression, he said, "Yes, yes! Please enter, Sirs. Food and wine will be immediately sent for you. Ah'er, quickly prepare the rooms. Don't be slow."

"Yes, Innkeeper." Although this action had caused him to feel deeply resentful, Ah'er could only obey. He could only sigh and allow the silver piece to be taken away.

Were it not for the fact he only had the skills for a waiter and that there were only two inns in the city, he couldn't afford to say anything about this. After resentfully cursing Innkeeper Liu in his heart, Ah'er brought the three each to a room on the second floor.

"Huh?" Just as Ah'er departed from their side, the scorching heat suddenly returned. This sudden change caused him to feel a wave of doubt as he scratched the back of his head. After tilting his head in thought, he descended with confusion.

A table of food was quickly prepared and was brought up with Ah'er and a few other servants.

The cultivators were waiting at the table in complete silence.

Ah'er was baffled upon seeing them. The cultivator with the draped hair coldly glanced in his direction as if he had noticed something.

Ah'er instantly felt as if he were emerged in ice. With a shaken heart, he lowered his head and left the room in a panic. He directly returned to the inn's door with an restless heart.

At that moment, the three in the room finally began to speak.

Sensing that there was no one outside the room, the short and stout man chuckled and spoke to the man with the draped hair, "Old Pal Han, why did you startle the mortal? Did you find him displeasing to the eye?"

The draped haired man flatly said, "It was nothing. It was just

that waiter possessed spiritual roots. However, his aptitude is poor. He would only be able to reach the fourth layer of Qi Condensation stage.”

A trace of astonishment appeared in the fat man’s expression, “Spiritual roots? That’s surprising. However, it seems that Brother Han is actually able to see through spiritual roots without any physical contact. It appears Brother Han is quite a skilled individual.”

The draped-haired cultivator glanced at the fat cultivator and slowly said, “My cultivation isn’t any higher than you two Fellow Daoists. I merely cultivated a related secret technique.”

The fat cultivator sighed and bitterly laughed, “Brother Han is far too modest. However, that waiter can be said to have no prospects in the cultivation world. Even if he managed to somehow reach Foundation Establishment stage like us, if he doesn’t have the backing of a sect, he will merely be a wild lone wolf, a target of humiliation to cultivators of a similar grade! We ourselves came to Purple Road Mountain to bid the Fu Clan Ancestor a happy birthday to see if we have the opportunity to join the sect. If we are able to catch the eye of a Devil Dao Sect or the Clan Ancestor, we’d be quite fortunate. It is just a pity that us vagrant cultivators can only enter the Fu Clan Castle on the Ancestor’s birth date. We still must wait another month.”

The draped-haired cultivator indifferently grunted and nodded his head as if he were disinclined to further speaking.

The fat man and the bald man couldn’t help but look at each other in response. The bald man widely opened his round eyes and said with a muffled voice, “Brother Han, us two brothers only formed a party together to go pay our respects to the Fu Clan Castle. But in the past several days, we realize that while you are also a vagrant cultivator, your cultivation is unordinary. Where might you have cultivated previously? We’ve never heard of your esteemed name before.”

After the large bald man finished speaking, the eyes of the fat cultivator glinted and he began to stare at Han Li.

The draped-haired cultivator's face remained unchanged. He merely indifferent replied, "I was once a cultivator of the State of Yue. I've only came to the State of Yuan Wu recently. It isn't odd that you Fellow Daoists haven't heard of me."

The fate cultivator blinked and asked, "The State of Yue? Isn't that the territory of the Ghost Spirit Sect? Why did Brother Han not try his luck with the Ghost Spirit Sect instead of coming to our State of Yuan Wu?"

The draped-haired cultivator calmly replied, "I did try, but there is no path forward. Given that the Ghost Spirit Sect is the sole power in the State of Yue, it doesn't tolerate the existence of outside cultivators. As such, I came to the State of Yuan Wu to try my luck. However, I didn't expect to come across the Fu Clan Ancestor's birth celebration as soon as I appeared. I couldn't possibly have easily allowed such a rare opportunity to pass me by."

"So it was like that. It must've been difficult for Brother Han." The fat man chuckled and asked nothing else. Instead, he began to chat about a few of the rumors circulating throughout the cultivation world.

Once the wine and food were finished. The draped-haired cultivator bid his farewell and decided to rest in a neighboring room.

Once the draped-haired cultivator left the room, the fat cultivator's beaming smile instantly disappeared, only to be replaced with a sinister expression. He suddenly took out a talisman from his robes and formed a hand incantation. Then with a flash of light, the talisman dissolved and enveloped the room in a soft light.

This talisman was a soundproofing talisman!

Once the talisman was in full effect, the large bald man hastily asked, “Brother Luo, do you believe that youngster is truly a vagrant cultivator?”

The fat cultivator sneered and stroked the fat underneath his chin. He sinisterly said, “Certainly not. He is most likely a disciple of a small sect!”

Chapter 649: Harboring Sinister Designs

The short and stout cultivator explained with a proud expression, “Did you not see his magic tool when we were traveling together? That was clearly a top grade magic tool. Not to mention the many storage pouches at his waist. They were all bulging and there were even a few spirit beast pouches there. How could a vagrant cultivator possess so many items? It is clear that this cultivator came from a small sect. If he came from a large sect, he would’ve been too arrogant to travel with the likes of us. Additionally, he didn’t take out an invitation card to enter Purple Road Mountain. Hehe! After all, given how powerful the Devil Dao are, small sect cultivators wouldn’t dare to act so openly. All of them would sneakily act as vagrant cultivators for fear that they would attract the Devil Dao’s ire and subject calamity upon their clan for generations to come. That is why we’ve never heard of him despite his strong cultivation and magic tools.”

With eyes filled with avarice, the bald man rubbed his hands in eagerness, “From what Brother Luo has said, that does seem to be the case and we can boldly attack him without worry. Although he is somewhat wary of us, he definitely wouldn’t have thought that we were concealing our true cultivation. It should be quite easy for us two mid Foundation Establishment cultivators to kill an early Foundation Establishment cultivator. That youngster is bringing about his own doom to come across the Dual Fiends Peng Yi.”

The fat man licked his thick lips and sinisterly said, “Of course, but in order to smoothly succeed, we lower his guard as much as possible. It will take much less effort if we launch a sneak attack. Let’s wait two days prior to the Fu Clan Ancestor’s birth celebration to attack.”

“Yes, let’s do as Brother Luo says. Even if neither of us makes it into a sect of clan, we’ll still make quite a bit of profit!” The bald man seemed quite confident in the fat man and he wore a grin on

his face.

The fat man chuckled and said, “Hehe, of course. If such an easy mark comes knocking on your door, how could the Dual Fiends Peng Yi return empty handed?”

While the two chatted without restraint about killing the draped-haired man, the man in question sat down expressionlessly in the other room. However, he was able to easily hear their words as if the soundproofing barrier didn’t exist.

Han Li opened his eyes with a cold glint and softly said, “Since you’ve taken the initiative to court death, don’t blame me for being ruthless.” He then closed his eyes once more and continued to refine Qi.

To tell the truth, Han Li had arrived in the State of Yuan Wu two months prior. He had passed through many countries affiliated with the Righteous and Devil Dao along the way, but as a Nascent Soul cultivator, he was able to stealthily pass through with his cultivation and appearance concealed.

After Han Li arrived in the State of Yuan Wu, Han Li didn’t immediately take action. Instead, he gathered information on the Fu Clan from the local market cities and vagrant cultivators. As a result, Han Li found rather displeasing information about the Fu Clan.

This wasn’t because the three Fu Clan Core Formation cultivators were troublesome to kill, but that the Fu Clan had many of their disciples located in the Devilflame Sect. Even with his vast abilities, he couldn’t directly contend against the Devilflame Sect itself.

And if he didn’t kill the entirety of the Fu Clan at once, the Fu Clan could one day rise to prominence once more, leaving his promise with Xin Ruyin unfulfilled! Just as Han Li was making a plan for action, rumors of the Fu Clan Ancestor’s birth celebration spread throughout the State of Yuan Wu. When Han Li heard this,

he rejoiced.

Since the Fu Clan Lord took the initiative to call upon his clan disciples to pay their respects to him, the Fu Clan disciples of the Devilflame Sect should also be returning to the Fu Clan castle. This was an ideal opportunity to deal with the entire Fu Clan in a single blow.

However, given Fu Clan's current power, not anyone could participate in the celebration. One must either be a cultivator from a clan or be a member of the Devil Dao. As for vagrant cultivators, they had to be at Foundation Establishment stage in order to enter the castle.

After Han Li acquired the finer details, he patiently waited a month to pass by. As for the Dual Fiends Peng Yi, they immediately chatted with him along the road when they saw that Han Li possessed an unordinary magic tool. When they heard that Han Li was also heading to the Fu Clan Castle, they happily raised an invitation to travel together.

Han Li could tell the two harbored sinister designs at first glance, but he had nothing to fear from the two, given his current cultivation. Instead, he casually agreed to travel with them with plans to use their identities to allow him to enter the Fu Clan without suspicion.

But he didn't expect that only cultivators with invitations would be allowed inside the Purple Road Mountains. Vagrant cultivators could only enter the castle on the day of the celebrations.

This was to Han Li's surprise, but it didn't matter. After all, that day should be when all the Fu Clan disciples and members should gather together. If he were to act any earlier, he would scare a few away.

As of current, he was staying at an inn and hadn't yet planned on how he should deal with the Dual Fiends Peng Yi. Since the two were incapable of staying patient, Han Li wasn't going to be

merciful.

In the following days, Han Li and the Dual Fiends Peng Yi took a few trips nearby and would return to the inn at night to cultivate. The time of the Fu Clan celebration drew near.

In these few days, The two spoke quite effectively with Han Li and even addressed him as “Brother Han” as if they were good friends for many years. At that moment, many vagrant cultivators began to gather at the small city. While a majority of vagrant cultivators were accustomed to the outdoors, a few cultivators more fond of creature comforts stayed at the two inns of the city.

As a result, Han Li came across several other cultivators at the same inn. When these cultivators came across Han Li and two cultivators at their side, their expressions vastly changed and they steered clear of the three, doing their utmost to avoid talking to them. Han Li wasn't sure whether or not he should laugh or cry. It seemed the two at his side held a rather notorious reputation among vagrant cultivators.

When the Dual Fiends Peng Yi saw this, they feared that Han Li would grow suspicious and fabricated a story that the two didn't get along with other cultivators. As a result, the two alternated keeping watch of Han Li, preventing him to speaking with anybody else.

When Han Li heard them, he was completely indifferent. However, the fat man grew somewhat doubtful, but his greed got the best of him.

Two days later, the two cultivators suddenly urged Han Li to visit a nearby scenic spot with them. They said that the scene was fascinating and was too good to miss.

After Han Li heard them, he knew that the two finally planned to attack. With a curt agreement, he followed the two with a smile and the three head out from the inn towards this ‘scenic spot’.

Because there were far too many cultivators nearby, the two could only think of bringing Han Li out fifty kilometers from the city to a small remote mountain.

Once they all landed, the fat man began to speak with a beaming smile, “Brother Han, take a look! There is a small valley past this mountain. There are pure flowing streams and flowers of countless sorts. It is absolutely...” Despite the plain surroundings, he managed to continue his fanciful words about how impressive the scenery was.

When Han Li heard this, he continued to derisively laugh in his mind. There truly was a hidden valley past this mountain. But apart from the passable scenery, there was also the spiritual fluctuations of a hidden restriction. It was very faint, but he was able to detect it with his spiritual sense. It appeared the two were quite experienced at killing others as they placed down a rather simple spell formation.

If Han Li truly were an ordinary Foundation Establishment cultivator, he would’ve found it difficult to survive if he entered the formation and were suddenly attacked by the two.

When Han Li finished listening to the fat cultivator, he casually swept his gaze around and mysteriously smiled at the two, “This scenery is not bad and there is no one here. From how I see it, there is no purpose in going to the valley. Right here should be fine. What do you two think? No one would be disturbed if you were to kill someone here and rid of their remains. It should surely go unnoticed.”

When the fat cultivator heard Han Li, his expression changed and he flusteredly spoke as if he were truly surprised, “Brother Han, what do you mean? Could it be you’ve misunderstood something?”

However, his chubby hands had already moved to his storage pouch. As for the large bald man, a savage expression appeared on his face and he silently moved to Han Li’s side with his hands

tightly clenched.

Han Li held their petty maneuvers in little regard and remained in place with a serene expression.

When the fat cultivator saw this, he grew anxious and faintly felt a sense of foreboding. However, it was far too late to back down and merely moved to attack simultaneously with the bald man.

Chapter 650: Demon Nascent

In the same moment the two men moved to attack Han Li, a chuckle suddenly broke out.

“Hehe! How interesting. I didn’t think I’d wake up from my nap to see murder and plunder. But for two Foundation Establishment cultivators to attack a Nascent Soul cultivator? Could I be dreaming?”

These words were said by the soft, sharp voice of a young girl.

Once Han Li heard this, his expression changed. As for the fat and the bald cultivators, they were thunderstruck and immediately turned deathly pale.

“A Nascent Soul cultivator!?” The fat cultivator shrieked and stared at Han Li as if he were looking at a ghost.

The bald man was greatly frightened as well, but he appeared to have thought of something and hastily shouted, “That’s impossible! His colleague must be attempting to scare us off.”

Although he had attempted to rouse himself, he still took two steps back while continuously glancing around for the young girl. His courage greatly recovered when he found no one.

At the moment, Han Li was far more alarmed than the “Dual Fiends Peng Yi”.

For some unknown reason, he felt his body break into an indescribable shiver as the Nascent Soul that had been deep asleep in his Dantian awoke in a panic. A trace of dread had even appeared on its face. But what was most astonishing to Han Li was that after sweeping every inch of a five kilometer radius with his spiritual sense, he was incapable of finding the source of the voice. But from the sound of it, the owner should clearly be nearby. Despite using the Great Development Technique alongside his Nascent Soul cultivation, he was unable to discover the speaker.

Could it be this person possessed deep and profound abilities?

Han Li's throat dried up at the thought.

The fat cultivator regained a bit of color in his face as if he had been roused by the bald man's words. He calmly glanced around and said, "Who's there? Who is it that is deceiving us? You dare to trick the Dual Fiends Peng Yi?" His body was covered in the glow of a barrier of yellow light as a small black shield appeared in front of him.

The girlish voice boldly said, "Hehe! If you could see this old woman, I'd kill myself out of shame. However, the spiritual sense of this Nascent Soul cultivator is quite strong. If it were even slightly stronger, perhaps you'd be able to find me."

Han Li's expression grew sullen and he did his utmost to sweep his spiritual sense over everything in his surroundings. Even with his exceptional spiritual sense, he was unable to find even a trace of another cultivator. He felt that this was far too strange.

"Hm, I am a tad hungry. How about I make a meal out of you three? Tch tch, it's been a while since I've had a taste of a cultivator's Nascent Soul. I long to experience it once more!" The girl's tone was completely free of malice, in stark contrast to the meaning of the words being said.

Han Li snorted and ceased concealing his cultivation while his expression remained unchanged. With a flash of azure light, an astonishing pressure began to emit from his body and many azure lights flew out from his mouth. These were the seventy-two Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords.

"He... He truly is a Nascent Soul cultivator! Senior, please spare our lives. Us Juniors had eyes but were blind to your magnificence. We didn't mean to offend Senior. Second Brother, what are you doing!? Don't run! We don't stand a chance before Senior Han."

The fat cultivator couldn't help but feel completely awed after

the emergence of Han Li's true cultivation and immediately kowtowed before him as he plead for his life. As for the huge man, he did the opposite, and slapped a golden talisman onto his body. He abruptly traveled through the sky in a streak of golden light.

"Do you truly believe you'll be able to run away with a Goldspeed Talisman?" A derisive expression appeared on Han Li's face. He pointed his finger and a flying sword loudly rang out before disappearing with a glint. But in the next instant, it appeared at the side of the golden streak not far away.

In a flash of azure light, the large man miserably screamed and the golden light dissolved into specks. The man's body had already disappeared.

"Tch tch, what a shame. A Foundation Establishment cultivator's soul also has a fine taste. I only had them eight times before I awoke." The girlish voice grumbled with slight annoyance.

When Han Li finished dealing with the bald man, he ignored the fat cultivator trembling before him and turned his gaze to a small tree nearby. With blue light flickering within his eyes, he said, "There is no need for your esteemed self to act so mysteriously. Are you not also a mere Nascent Soul cultivator? For you to speak so boldly, it seems you want me to personally drag you out."

The girlish voice paused for a moment before coldly continuing, "How did you discover me? My Light Transmutation Technique isn't something that a Nascent Soul cultivator can see through."

"Regardless of my method to discover you, will you not reveal your true form? Or would you rather I chop down that tree of yours?" Han Li's voice remained calm, but his heart was filled with trepidation. He had only found the source of the voice by a fluke.

In his panic, he had unconsciously swept his surroundings using the ability granted to him by the Brightsight Water. As a result, he found a small tree nearby that was somewhat unlike the others. With a resolved heart, he confronted it, no longer wishing to be

deceived.

“A mere Nascent Soul cultivator? Your tone is also quite bold. I wonder how your Nascent Soul will taste once I swallow it.” As the girl’s tone grew sullen, the small tree flashed with green light, shrinking to reveal a person only half a foot tall.

This small person had an exquisite face and long hair. However, its body was composed of green light and completely bare. It seemed this small silhouette was the source of the girlish voice.

“A Nascent Soul! No, that’s not right.” After further examination, Han Li appeared hesitant.

The small silhouette looked at Han Li and slowly said, “A Nascent Soul? Hehe, you aren’t wrong. But you are quite out of luck to be the first Nascent Soul cultivator I’ve seen since awakening, or maybe my luck is just good!”

Soon after speaking the small silhouette flashed and appeared before the fat cultivator. it giggled and said, “Your soul would make a good fit in my stomach, yes?”

“No! Senior, please spare me!” Realizing that this small silhouette was an existence on par with a Nascent Soul cultivator, the fat cultivator pleaded for his life as he jumped away, wishing to flee.

However, a malevolent expression surfaced on the small silhouette’s face, and its body turned into a ball of green light that shot into the fat cultivator. An instant later, it came out of the man’s body back in its original form, except with a thumb-sized green ball of light that was intermittently twinkling.

As for the leader of the “Dual Fiends Peng Yi”, he had already collapsed onto the floor and was no longer moving.

The small silhouette didn’t bother to speak any further and simply gobbled the ball of light with a few bites. Afterwards, the silhouette’s body grew slightly more concentrated.

Han Li could no longer keep calm upon seeing this. After pursing

his lips, he harshly shouted, “Are you ghost or man? You dare to directly consume a soul!?”

He had clearly felt the small silhouette’s cultivation to be similar to his own at the early Nascent Soul stage. But after it consumed that soul, it grew a sliver stronger, clearly demonstrating that it could increase its cultivation by directly consuming cultivators’ souls. It was inconceivable that this was the result of a technique.

The incandescent green silhouette ignored Han Li’s question and instead glanced at Han Li’s Dantian as if it were directly looking at his Nascent Soul. It wore a greedy expression and muttered, “The appetizer is done and now it is time for the banquet. After consuming your Nascent Soul, this old woman will be able to directly enter mid Nascent Soul stage!”

“You want to swallow my Nascent Soul? I’m afraid it’d be a bit much for you!” Han Li furiously grinned and he clapped his hands together. A muffled explosion sounded out, followed by thick golden lightning arcing between his palms.

Ever since Han Li had entered Nascent Soul stage, he was able to directly store Divine Devilbane Lightning from his swords into his body. As a result, he was able to use the lightning as before despite having all seventy-two swords outside of his body.

The green silhouette tilted its head upon seeing the golden lightning in Han Li’s palms and muttered, “Golden lightning? Where did I hear of this before? I can’t seem to recall it.”

Han Li raised his brow and indifferently said, “Then how about giving it a taste? I’m sure you’ll recall it.” At that moment, the lightning in his hands transformed into a python and fiercely pounced towards the small silhouette.

For some unknown reason, the small silhouette remained in place with a smile and directly swallowed the python. Afterwards, countless arcs of lightning burst from all around the small silhouette. A short moment later, the silhouette glowed with

golden lightning and released pangs of thunder.

Han Li narrowed his eye, lacking the slightest joy in his expression. Since the opponent dared to directly receive the Divine Devilbane Lightning, they were clearly well prepared and weren't about to easily be dispatched.

Before the golden glow faded away, the girl's laughter interrupted the sounds of thunder, "As I thought, is this not Divine Devilbane Lightning? Tch tch, isn't this just great! It's hard to believe that a mere early Nascent Soul cultivator could possess such a heavenly treasure. However, don't think that this old woman is a devil or ghost cultivator. Using that lightning to deal with me is beyond its abilities!"

Chapter 651: Wood Spirit Nascent

The small green silhouette hadn't taken the slightest damage from Han Li's strike and sneered at Han Li.

Han Li scoffed, "It's too early to be proud. If you truly wish to devour my Nascent Soul, it's going to take more than a few arrogant words. If I had guessed correctly, you can only consume the souls of low grade cultivators. To speak of consuming a cultivator's Nascent Soul is pure fantasy. Perhaps you might've been able to previously do this, but as of current, your mind may wish it, but your body is weak. You are only capable of assuming that strange form of yours. Enough rubbish, let's first see how you fare against these flying swords." These words caused the small silhouette's expression to vastly change, revealing malice from its eyes.

At that moment, Han Li pointed to the flying swords spiralling above him. With a clear ring, twelve of the flying swords shot forward in a streak of azure light.

The small green silhouette stood in place with a sullen expression. As the dozen of azure swordlights spiralled around the small person and sliced it up into countless strands. As these strands remained floating in the air, they began to sparkle, much to Han Li's alarm.

A bewildering chuckle soon came from strands and they flickered with light before restoring the small silhouette in its original form.

The silhouette seemed to have been completely infuriated by Han Li's words. It ominously, "Tch tch! Not bad, not bad! Your set of flying swords must've been created from Golden Lightning Bamboo. Although I don't know how you acquired so much of it, it is truly ridiculous to think of injuring me with those swords alone. You will come to know that my words aren't born of arrogance."

The silhouette then formed an incantation gesture with its hands

and blinding green radiance gleamed. But before it could fully finish casting its technique, bright light flashed from above its head. Twelve flying swords simultaneously pulsed with lightning and formed a dense net of golden lightning as it charged towards it.

“Humph! This junior still won’t give up! Did I not say that the divine lightning has no effect on me... Wait, what are you doing!?” The girlish voice became shrill as if it grew frightened.

The net of golden lightning didn't explode as it had anticipated. Instead, the net remained firm when it caught the small silhouette, and it unceasingly tightened around the silhouette. The small silhouette knew that this was far from good, and its body flickered with green light in its utmost attempt to resist. However, its struggle was in vain as it was soon trapped in a large golden ball.

When Han Li saw this, he couldn’t help but wryly smile.

This net of Divine Devilbane Lightning was a technique that was founded by Han Li!

Because Golden Lightning Bamboo was exceeding rare, only one or two stalks would be used in the formation of a magic tool. And since they had a limited amount of divine lightning, they were only reserve as a trump card against devilish and evil techniques. Additionally, making such a large net of lightning would require over ten stalks worth of Divine Devilbane Lightning to form. As such, none could’ve afforded to do this before Han Li.

Having controlled the Divine Devilbane Lightning for so many years, Han Li already sensed that in addition to an innate ability to subdue evil and devilish techniques, it also possessed the wondrous effect of restraining the five elements. Regardless of whether it was the Sacred Asura Flames or Wind Spirit Energy, they had both been actively and securely subdued. This unexpected discovery was much to Han Li’s delight.

While he was still at Core Formation stage, he was unable to use

lightning nets as he wished because of his lacking cultivation, and had rarely used them in battle. But with his vastly strengthened cultivation and spiritual sense as of current, he no longer had such problems.

Although he didn't know where this little silhouette came from, he knew that it was neither flesh or ghost; it was more akin to a strange variation of a cultivator's Nascent Soul. With that thought, Han Li attempted to make use of the net.

Unfortunately for the silhouette, although it had heard legends of the Divine Devilbane Lightning, it was unaware of its hidden properties. Else, it wouldn't have so casually received the attack with its body as a Demon Nascent. In the blink of an eye, this haughty figure had been easily confined.

Seeing that it succeeded, Han Li smiled and raised his hand, shooting out an azure mist to collect the golden ball into his hand.

The golden sphere faintly trembled and released furious, ear-piercing shrieks, "You dare to trap this old woman!? Quickly release me or else I will refine your soul and subject you to a fate worse than death!"

Han Li frowned and sullenly said, "Refine my soul? It seems your esteemed self still doesn't understand your situation. Let's talk about this again once you've properly calmed down."

Claps of thunders rang out as lightning shot out from his hands. These thing slivers of lightning wrapped layers around the golden ball, consuming nearly half of his swords' lightning reserves. With some further inspection of the enlarged golden ball, he wore a satisfied expression.

Paying no heed of the girl's raving shouts from the golden ball, Han Li took out a white jade box from his storage pouch and shut it inside. He then took out a few restriction talismans and slapped them onto the box without any hesitation, putting a sudden end to the rant.

Han Li weighed the jade box in his hand and his expression was once again normal. After putting the jade box away, he glanced down at the soulless body of the fat cultivator and indifferently turned it to ash with a fireball before calmly flying in the direction of the small city.

A short moment later, Han Li leisurely made his way to the tavern and simply waited for the birth celebration to draw near.

Not long after, there was a shocking discovery in the State of Yuan Wu. The notorious murderers of vagrant cultivators Dual Fiends Peng Yi had completely disappeared from the country. Not a single trace of them have been found. Of course, this signified to many that they had died.

When this news reached around, the vagrant cultivators in the country cheered. There were those that said they were disposed of by a sect they offended. There was also word that they encountered an expert on their travels and were slayed as a result of their notoriety. For a time, all sorts of rumors filled the skies.

...

Tens of thousands kilometers away in the distant State of Tian Luo was the nest of the Six Devil Dao Sects. The Grand Spirit Mountains in the west of Tian Luo spanned over tens of thousands of kilometers without interruption. The mountains were steep and were home to countless spirit beasts and exotic insects. It was the location of the Controlling Spirit Sect's monastery.

In the instant the Demon Nascent was sealed, an old man's furious shout suddenly echoed from a pitch-black stone room, "Who is it!? Who dares to imprison the Wood Spirit Nascent! Servant quickly contact the Spirit Controlling Sect members in the State of Yuan Wu. If they are unable to find the Wood Spirit Nascent in three month's time, then they will have to kill themselves for the sin of their failure. Also, they must act carefully not to let the Devilflame Sect be aware of this matter."

Although the old man was furious, his orders were concise .

“As you bid, Martial Senior. I will pass down the commands.” A man’s stern voice came out from outside the room.

The old man continued, “I’m not done! Also call for Yunzhi and Liu Yu’er to personally make a trip to the State of Yuan Wu. They both have wood attribute spiritual roots and have the most suitable bodies for the Wood Spirit Nascent. Perhaps they will be able to feel something if they go closer to the Wood Spirit Nascent. However, have the two women be careful. Whoever restrained the Wood Spirit Nascent is certain to possess great abilities. The two women wouldn’t be able to confront him. So long as they find the person who imprisoned the Wood Spirit Nascent, I will come to personally deal with them.”

The man’s voice respectfully replied, “Yes, I will personally tell the two Junior Martial Sisters to go. This Martial Nephew will now take his leave.”

Soon after the man’s footsteps faded into the distance, a deep sigh filled the room and the darkness became silent once more.

...

Behind the concealment of the purple mist of the Purple Road Mountains, the Fu Clan Master Fu Tianhua, was in high spirits with a flushed face. He viewed all the juniors in his clan with a kind face, leaving his juniors feeling overwhelmed with favor. They were all used to him wearing a more stern expression.

This was of no surprise. The Marital Ancestor’s celebration of four hundred years of life was about to arrive. He was the oldest Core Formation cultivator in the clan, and even two of the Devilflame Sects’ enforcers were going to come today for his birthday celebration. This greatly increased the Fu Clan’s prestige.

The Fu Clan juniors didn’t dare to be negligent and were doing their utmost around the castle so that this birth celebration

wouldn't result in a loss of prestige for the clan ancestor.

After the Fu Clan ancestor made a round through the castle, he seemed quite satisfied. He then entered a side hall with a few juniors in tow.

The sharp-eyed, purple-robed Fu Clan Ancestor leaned against an armchair in the room and slowly said, "Qing'er! Have the honorable guests from the Devilflame Sect arrived yet? Is there something keeping them busy?" While his voice wasn't loud, it was filled with dignity, suitable for the man who led the Fu Clan through over a hundred years of prosperity.

"Venerable Ancestor, the Devilflame Sect's Senior Sun has sent over a disciple stating that he and Protector Mo will certainly arrive to offer congratulations. However, it will take one or two days more." A pale forty-year-old cultivator helplessly replied in a hurry.

Chapter 652: Omen

An old man with thin-eyebrows and embroidered robes stood at the side of the pale-faced man and added on, “Even so, Martial Ancestor need not worry. The Fu Clan maintained a steady relationship with Seniors Sun and Mo for over a hundred years. They will arrive soon. As their sects’ current heights was in significant part due to our Fu Clan’s backing, we can be considered to be closely tied together. Besides, we sent two of our clans’ most outstanding female disciples as their concubines. They would be embarrassed not to come.”

The Fu Clan Ancestor twirled his long beard and a cold glint flickered from his eyes. With his previous smile vanished, he said, “It’s not that I’m worried whether or not Brother Sun and Mo will come, but I merely feel somewhat ill at ease at the day of the birth celebration approaches. It seems as if something great is about to happen. It is rather worrying! Has our Fu Clan recently offended a particularly fearsome character or some larger sects?”

When this was said, the people in the hall couldn’t help but look at each other in dismay.

After a long while, the pale faced man carefully answered, “Venerable Ancestor, you should also know this. Although our Fu Clan has greatly flourished over the years, we’ve offended countless clans and small sects. But the most hostile to us are the Qin and Hu Clans. Could they be plotting something?”

“It definitely isn’t those two clans! While those two clans were able to contend with us for some time, they no longer possess many high grade cultivators. They don’t have the capability to stir up trouble.” The Fu Clan Ancestor coldly shook his head, but he soon frowned. With some further hesitation, he said, “However, if they were join hands with other small clans, they may take advantage of this opportunity to attack. They’d be able to greatly injure the clan’s strength.

After all, in order to curry favor with the Devilflame Sect, our Fu Clan killed many of the two clan's cultivators for resisting the Devil Dao. As of current, the Qin and Hu Clans have lost their backing and are hiding away. With the hatred they holds towards us, it isn't an impossible matter." With that said, the Fu Clan Ancestor's expression grew sullen.

The embroidered-robed old man cautiously asked, "What does Venerable Ancestor mean?"

In an instant, the Fu Clan Ancestor leaned his head back and closed his eyes. Then with an adamant tone, he declared, "We will be calm on the surface, but remain inwardly vigilant! Double the sentries! Have the protective formation continuously activated without pause! And be particularly mindful of vagrant cultivators with unclear background!"

"Yes, it will be arranged!" The pale-faced cultivator immediately accepted the orders.

Seeing that the Fu Clan Ancestor appeared to be in a poor mood, the remaining Fu Clan Juniors all stood in place, even not daring to breathe too loudly.

The Fu Clan Ancestor suddenly said, "Tianyun, call over your Third Uncle. Have him take the Ironback Beast into his spirit beast pouch and bring it along with him to the birth celebration. Only he can control our Fu Sect's sacred sect protecting beast!"

The embroidered-robed old man couldn't help cry out, "What? Didn't Esteemed Ancestor say that Third Uncle should be disturbed during the birth celebration because he was currently in a crucial point in his cultivation?"

The Fu Clan Ancestor coldly snorted and said, "The past is the past, the present is now! Although cultivators can't always predict calamity as it appears, there are times where one's instinct is particularly sharp. It cannot be helped. In order to be careful, it is better for this old man to overly suspicious than having our Fu

Clan meet calamity.”

Seeing that the Fu Clan Ancestor was about to get angry, the old man obediently agreed, “Yes, Ancestor! I will now call Third Uncle out of seclusion.” He promptly left afterwards.

Not yet finished, the Fu Clan Ancestor gave many more additional orders before finally feeling at ease.

With so many preparations in place for contingencies, he felt as if matters would be taken care of.

On a barren mountain outside of Violet Road Mountain, there was a group of thirty vagrant cultivators that were pointing at the purple mist and were whispering amongst them.

Han Li was mixed among the cultivators and were examining his surroundings in silence as if he were a common recluse.

It had come as a surprise to Han Li that there were so many vagrant Foundation Establishment cultivators in the State of Yuan Wu. Only a small portion of them should’ve come to congratulate the Fu Clan Ancestor’s age. Back when he was in the State of Yue, vagrant Foundation Establishment cultivators were rarely seen.

Although the State of Yuan Wu was somewhat larger than the State of Yue, the different shouldn’t have been great. But after a hundred years had passed, this new development made Han Li feel as if the world had left him behind.

However, Han Li was unaware that before the Righteous and Devil Dao attacked, a majority of Foundation Establishment Pills were held by sects and clans; few ever made their way into the hands of vagrant cultivators. But with the upheaval from a hundred years ago, many sects and clans ended up being exterminated. Destroyed inheritances and incense burning were common occurrences, resulting in a large quantity of Foundation Establishment pills being spread in the chaos.

Although a majority of pills were acquired by clans and sects, the

small portion that managed to land into the hands of vagrant cultivators created a sudden increase of Foundation Establishment disciples in each country, forming a large amount of force. There were even a few vagrant cultivators that had managed to reach Core Formation through chance.

As the Righteous Dao, the Devilish Dao, and the Heavenly Dao Alliance, they all adopted a policy of absorbing all vagrant cultivators they could and suppressing those that resisted. As a result, the vagrant cultivators weren't able to form anything greater, despite their vast increase in number.

As Han Li was mulling over this, he suddenly spotted eight streaks of red light flying across the sky. After landing in front of the purple mist, the light faded away to reveal a group of cultivators wearing fire-red robes.

There were two Core Formation cultivators leading the group. One had a faceful of white hair and a gourd at his waist. The other had an ordinary appearance but his eyes possessed a threatening chill.

The vagrant cultivators became restless upon seeing the new arrivals. Some even whispered that they came from the Devilflame Sect.

The more experienced vagrant cultivators spoke in particularly soft whispers, fearing that the Devilflame Sect members would hear them, "Those are the Devilflame Sect's External Affair Enforcers Sun and Mo. The two female cultivators at their side should be the renowned beauties of the Fu Clan. I heard that they've already become the two Senior's concubines."

Han Li naturally heard all of this with his spiritual sense. He couldn't help but sweep his gaze past the Devilflame Sect Core Formation cultivators and the two female cultivators at their sides. As expected, the two women were gorgeous beauties.

The Devilflame Sect cultivators seemed to ignore the vagrant

cultivators. A disciple from the party walked towards the dense mist and sent a voice transmission talisman into it. Afterwards, the disciple obediently stood behind the two Core Formation cultivators.

A short moment later, the purple mist rolled away to reveal a passageway. Many Fu Clan disciples respectfully welcomed them in.

Han Li took advantage of this opportunity to take a deep look at the many Fu Clan disciples before expressionlessly turning his gaze away.

At that moment, the party of Devilflame Sect cultivators entered the purple mist and the passageway faded away.

In the following four hours, a few cultivators from other clans and small sects began to successively arrive at the mountain and were similarly welcomed in.

After another long while, a steward with an apologetic expression walked out from the mist.

“It is quite lacking in manners for our Fu Clan to keep you Fellow Daoists waiting so long. It isn’t that our Fu Clan looks down on you, but that there is finite space inside the Fu Clan Castle. It would prove quite chaotic for too many cultivators to be inside at once. As such, we could only have you enter the castle on the day of the celebration. Nevertheless, please be at ease. So long as you sincerely congratulate the Venerable Ancestor, we will treat you fairly. The feast has already been prepared inside the main hall. Please enter the castle.”

The steward spoke elegantly, dissipating a majority of the vagrant cultivators’ discontent. Then, the vagrant cultivators silently glanced at each other before following the middle-aged steward into the mist.

Han Li calmly walked at the back of the crowd, but a moment

later, he disappeared from sight.

Regardless of whether it be the cultivators walking ahead of him or the Fu Clan disciples that were in charge of monitoring the sect, they had all failed to perceive this anomaly as if Han Li had never been there.

Many Fu Clan Foundation Establishment cultivators were currently standing in front of an extravagant hall. They beamingly welcomed the visitors, leaving them with a deep and warm impression.

There were about three hundred guests in the castle, with those having arrived today from those arriving days before. Now that the Fu Clan Ancestor's birthday has arrived, these guests gathered together in front of the main hall, waiting for the Fu Clan Ancestor's appearance.

Given the Fu Clan's immense influence in the State of Yuan Wu, the vagrant cultivators and smaller clansmen were spouting praises without end. Even the emissaries from larger clans were chatting with Fu Clan cultivators with a wide smile.

Chapter 653: Clan Extermination (1)

The Fu Clan Ancestor wasn't near the main hall as of current. Instead, he was within one of the castle's secluded pavilions. He was looking at a faint sparkling jade slip in his hand.

Since he was the main character in the birthday celebration, he would be making his appearance at the last moment. He may as well take advantage of this idle time to handle a few more urgent matters as the Fu Clan's master.

In addition to the Fu Clan Ancestor, there was a large copper-skinned man sitting in the pavilion. His cultivation was at early Core Formation stage, and his waist was filled with variously-sized pouches.

The Fu Clan Ancestor suddenly slapped the table and shouted with a gloomy expression, "Humph! This isn't the State of Zijin! Those Spirit Controlling Sect want our assistance in acquiring information? Just what are they looking for? Do they consider our Fu Clan to be subordinates? Absurd!"

The large man stroked his chin and curiously said, "There is no need for Seventh Uncle to be so angry. Does the jade slip mention what they're looking for? Surely this must be something important for the cultivators of the Controlling Spirit Sect to act so nervously?"

"It is irritating how they wish to use us, but still keep us in the dark. They merely want us to be mindful of any strange events that have taken place recently in the State of Yuan Wu, and inform them as soon as anything occurs."

A spirited glint appeared in the large man's eyes. He pensively said, "Oh! So its like that? It seems the Controlling Spirit Sect wishes to conceal this matter from the Devilflame Sect, and sought our Fu Clan out as a result. This must also be why they are speaking so vaguely."

The old man twirled his beard and muttered, “Little Third, your words seem true. In order to further protect our Fu Clan, we should also secretly befriend the Spirit Controlling Sect just in case, in addition to serving the Devilflame Sect. While we’ve had friendly relations with the Controlling Spirit Sect for some time, they still don’t trust our Fu Clan much. It seems we should take a look at our plans. Perhaps the weakest of the Six Sects, the Ghost Spirit Sect, would also be good to befriend.”

“This may be...”

“Tch tch! I didn’t think that the Fu Clan was colluding with the Controlling Spirit Sect while so eager to please the Devilflame Sect. It is no wonder why your clan has been so prosperous the past hundred years.” The large man’s thoughts were suddenly interrupted by the derisive voice of an unfamiliar man.

The Fu Clan Ancestor and the large man felt shocked and simultaneously jumped up from their chairs. After glancing at each other in shock, the Fu Clan ancestor loudly asked, “Who is the lord that honors the Fu Clan with his presence? I, Fu Tianhua, hope Senior will forgive me for not welcoming him!”

“There is not need to welcome me. I came here uninvited.” As soon as that was said, azure light suddenly glowed from within the pavilion.

The Fu Clan Ancestor and the large man shouted out in alarm and withdrew to a corner of the room in a blur. A translucent barrier appeared on each of their bodies.

The Fu Clan Ancestor spat out a white flying sword and had it revolve around him. As for the large man, he grabbed onto the spirit beast pouch that was at his waist. It was black and unremarkable.

At that moment, the light faded away to reveal an azure-robed cultivator. He appeared to be an unremarkable youth in his mid twenties. It was Han Li who had sneaked into the castle.

At that moment, Han Li had his hands behind his back and swept his gaze past the two vigilant Fu Clan elders. He slowly said, “My spiritual sense swept past your Fu Clan castle and found that your cultivation was the highest amongst the few Core Formation cultivators in the castle. You must be the Fu Clan’s leaders!”

Han Li’s expression was tranquil and revealed not the slightest emotion.

With Han Li’s cultivation unconcealed, the two Core Formation cultivators were able to sense Han Li’s profound cultivation. In the old man’s alarm, he forced a smile in spite of his apprehension and said, “So it turned out to be a Nascent Soul Senior! May I ask why Senior honors us with his presence? Is there something that the Fu Clan may assist you with?”

Han Li narrowed his eyes and stared at the violet-robed old man at the corner of the room, “Are you the Fu Clan Ancestor?”

Upon hearing Han Li’s emotionless question, the Fu Clan Ancestor respectfully replied, “Junior doesn’t dare to call himself an ancestor in front of Senior. Junior’s name is Fu Tianhua, the current Fu Clan Master.” The unease in his heart only became more fervent. He faintly felt that this Nascent Soul cultivator didn’t hold any good intentions with his arrival.

Han Li looked at the old man and revealed a strange expression. “Hm, since you’re the Fu Clan Ancestor, it seems I hadn’t found the wrong person. Since I’ve come to the Fu Clan for reparations, it is better to first speak with your esteemed self.”

When the Fu Clan Ancestor heard Han Li, he felt his heart drop down an endless abyss. “Reparations? Senior must be joking. This is the first time Junior has ever seen Senior. Is Senior mistaken?”

When the large man at the side heard this, his complexion became bloodless and he couldn’t help but grasp the spirit beast pouch with greater force.

To hear of a Nascent Soul cultivator demanding reparations was a matter that was far from good.

Han Li casually glanced in the direction of the large man and beamingly smiled, “Mistaken? That can’t be! Originally, I thought to give you an explanation to avoid having you become wronged ghosts, but you’ve had a long history of dirty behavior so I won’t waste my breath. You two will be the first to go. I’ll promptly send the rest of the Fu Clan to accompany you on the other side.”

As soon as Han Li finished speaking, the Fu Clan Ancestor furiously shouted, “What!? You wish to exterminate the entire Fu Clan?” He took out a yellow talisman and quickly withdrew into the wall in a flash of light as if it were an illusion. It appeared to be a rarely seen earth movement talisman.

“Just where could you possibly run away?” Han Li scoffed, but he didn’t chase after him. Instead, he flicked his finger in a different direction.

A streak of azure light appeared as quickly as it disappeared, penetrating through the chest of the large man at the corner of the room. His barrier had been instantly shattered.

But in the instant the large man died, the spirit beast pouch flickered with light before soon fading away, releasing a faint roar.

The large man’s corpse fell to the floor, but Han Li didn’t bother to look at him. As of current, killing an early Core Formation cultivator was child’s play. However, he was somewhat interested in the spirit beast pouch in his hand and casually took it with a wave of his hand.

Han Li then glanced at the wall the Fu Clan Ancestor had disappeared in and smirked.

With a wave of his sleeve, a white fox flew out and appeared before Han Li.

Han Li ordered the small fox, “Use your earth movement

technique to deal with the Fu Clan Ancestor. With your illusions and cultivation as a tool spirit, it should be quite easy for you to deal with a mid Core Formation cultivator.”

“Of course, Master! It will take just a moment. I will return quickly!” The small fox revealed a proud appearance and it disappeared from the pavilion in the flash of yellow light. At that moment, Han Li patted the storage pouch at his waist, releasing countless black-tainted Gold Devouring Beetles in the air. A moment later, a huge cloud of black, gold, and silver swirled above him.

“Go!” Suddenly, the cloud of beetles separated into countless strands, instantly forming a hundred small blades swarming out from the window.

Han Li then sat cross-legged inside the pavilion and began to use the Great Development Technique to envelope the entirety of the Fu Clan Castle in his spiritual sense.

The direct descendants of the Fu Clan were easily identifiable. Regardless of what they wore, they all cultivated several of the same techniques, all of which were revealed underneath Han Li’s spiritual sense. As for the Fu Clan mortals that were lacking any spiritual roots, Han Li took no notice of them. He merely directed the tri-colored flying swords to devour the Fu Clan cultivators.

An instant later, miserable screams, shouts of alarm and the dense smell of blood filled the air.

As this was occurring, the Fu Clan Ancestor was deep underground and was quickly flying through the earth through the use of the talisman. His only thought was to escape into the distance. As for disciples and Juniors in the castle, he had no intention of thinking about them.

Although he didn’t personally see his large nephew die, he had already imagined what happened.

Even with the Fu Clan's sect protecting beast, escaping from a Nascent Soul cultivator was simply a pipedream. However, the Fu Clan Ancestor would be perfectly content if he occupied his attention for even just a moment.

As for the other Fu Clan members, he wished to save them, but he lacked the strength; he would merely become another casualty. As such, he may as well just preserve himself.

So long as the Fu Clan Ancestor still remained, the Fu Clan could be considered to be alive. Apart from the Fu Clan Castle, there were many other Fu Clan estates in the State of Yuan Wu. Provided that he survived, the Fu Clan would eventually rise once more.

However, he was particularly depressed and puzzled about how the Fu Clan had possibly attracted the ire of an unfamiliar Nascent Soul cultivator. He actually declared that the Fu Clan would be exterminated as soon as he began speaking. Although this Nascent Soul cultivator was entirely emotionless, the old man felt his heart tremble upon recalling his expression.

Chapter 654: Clan Extermination (2)

When the Fu Clan Ancestor flew out of scope of the Fu Clan Castle, he heard woman's soft voice speak, "Your earth movement technique is truly slow. How about you hand over your head and allow me to report back to Master?"

The Fu Clan Ancestor was greatly shocked and couldn't help but stop. In a white blur, a gorgeous beauty appeared before him. She stood only a meter before him and faced him with an enchanting smile.

"You..." Just as the Fu Clan Ancestor was about to cry out in alarm, the woman parted her sweet lips and blew out a pink fragrance mist, enveloping the vulnerable Fu Clan Ancestor in an instant.

The Fu Clan Ancestor inwardly cursed. He hastily attempted to cast a spell and flee, but the sweet scent made rendered his body lax and powerless. Before he could do anything to defend himself, he fell unconscious.

When Silvermoon saw that her prey had fallen unconscious, she faintly smiled and casually waved her hand, sending a white crescent streak towards his neck.

Blood splattered.

...

Inside the large hall of the Fu Clan Castle there were several hundred guests that were festively chatting. Several Core Formation cultivators that had personally come to pay their respects were kept company by a few of the higher grade cultivators in the Fu Clan. Friendly relations flourished between the guests and hosts.

But suddenly, there were several screams of anguish that could be faintly heard from outside the hall. The bustling voices in the

hall came to an abrupt stop, and many guests looked at each other in dismay. A few of the more quick-witted cultivators immediately turned their gazes onto the Fu Clan cultivators.

The blue-robed old man sitting at the side of the two Devilflame Sect enforcers also appeared shocked, but soon, he wore a calm expression and loudly shouted, “Everyone, please do not worry. It is possible it is but a small matter. I will call over someone and see what’s going on.” He was the younger cousin of the Fu Clan Ancestor and was the third Fu Clan Core Formation cultivator.

At that moment, he excused himself from the company of the two Devilflame Sect enforcers and turned to the two Fu Clan cultivators standing behind him. He immediately gave them orders to quickly rush out the hall and report back.

The two Devilflame Core Formation cultivators both appeared calm, but they glanced at each other with a trace of doubt.

Two more miserable screams came from the outside. It was clear that the two Fu Clan cultivators that were sent outside had met a vicious attack. The guests in the hall had clearly heard this, and their expressions vastly changed.

The blue-robed old man’s expression grew unsightly and he deeply sighed before standing up. He said with a deep voice, “Activate the hall’s restrictions and quickly send word to the Ancestor.”

When a nearby Fu Clan cultivator heard this, he acknowledged the order with a pale complexion. He then took out a sound transmission talisman from his robes and whispered a few words before releasing it.

The talisman shot out from the roof in a streak of red light, but a moment later, the cultivator spoke with a raspy voice, “Not good! The sound transmission talisman was shot down. We seem to be surrounded.”

When this was said, even the Core Formation guests couldn't remain calm.

The pockmarked Devilflame Sect Enforcer frowned and said, "Fellow Daoist Fu, it seems enemies have snuck into your castle. Brother Sun and I will go out with you and have a look."

The blue-robed old man's anxiousness was greatly relieved upon hearing him. He immediately rejoiced and said, "I am greatly thankful for your assistance. I will have to trouble you to do so."

The middle-aged man surnamed Sun frowned as if disapproving of his companion's actions, but he followed him nevertheless.

As for the remaining four Core Formation cultivators in the hall, they glanced at each other and didn't reveal the slightest intent to help. The others in the hall grew completely silent, watching the three Core Formation cultivators walk out from the hall.

As the three calmly approached the hall door, loud buzzing suddenly came from outside the hall. The three couldn't help but halt their steps upon hearing this.

In the blink of an eye, a thirty-meter-long beam of azure light swept inside and wrapped around the three Core Formation cultivators. A dozen lines of fine azure light then shot out from the azure beam in a display of blinding brilliance, forcing the cultivators in the hall to momentarily close their eyes. In that instant, the azure beam spiralled throughout the hall.

The blue-clothed old man and the two Devilflame Sect cultivators halted and their bodies grew motionless as if from shock. As the cultivators in the hall were stunned in their awe, they were completely oblivious to what was happening.

The sudden shriek of a female cultivator attracted the attention of all in the room.

The paled female cultivator was sitting at the side of a Fu Clan steward whose head had tumbled down at an unknown time. The

headless corpse was still sitting upright as blood sprayed from its severed neck.

The other cultivators then discovered that tens of Fu Clan cultivators, regardless of their rank, had their heads tumbling onto the ground in a silent death.

“The azure light! Someone is using a magic treasure to attack them! Fellow Daoist Fu, you must...” A cultivator who had decent relations to the Fu Clan loudly shouted in alarm as if to warn the three Core Formation cultivators, but soon, his words came to a sudden stop and his face became ashen.

At that moment, the blue-robed old man and company suddenly split into pieces as if they were made of paper. Their bodies had collapsed into piles of gore.

When this occurred, the guests of the birthday celebration felt their breath turn cold. Although these cultivators were able to somewhat keep their calm previously, they were now in a complete panic. Each of them enveloped themselves in a colorful barrier and filled the room with the bright glow of various colored lights. Magic tools of all sorts began to float in front of many cultivators. Even a few of the cultivators who held more than friendly relations to the Fu Clan gathered together restlessly with terrified expressions.

For three Core Formation cultivators and tens of Fu Clan disciples to be killed in the instant, how could it be anything else apart from the fearful existence known as a Nascent Soul cultivator! If it was truly a Nascent Soul cultivator, killing everyone else in the hall should be an extremely easy matter.

As fear filled the hearts of those present, none dared to make any noise. Many guests presently felt vast regret for attending this Fu Clan celebration. Wouldn't they be caught in the crossfire?

Deathly silence filled the hall.

A few of the Core Formation cultivators with stronger spiritual senses thought to stealthily release their spiritual sense to observe the outside. However, the Fu Clan had placed down many spiritual sense restrictions in order to protect their secrets from prying eyes. As a result, they were blocked and couldn't help but resentfully curse the Fu Clan.

As anxiousness filled the hall, the voice of an unfamiliar man spoke, "Those present are restricted from leaving this hall for two hours. Those who disobey will be killed! After those two hours are over, you may leave as you wish."

The man's voice was simple and cold, but it also carried an indescribable malice, shaking the hearts of those who heard it. Once those words were said, the cultivators in the room were greatly relieved. From his tone, it appeared that he had no intention of killing them.

However, they clearly understood that they were spared most likely because they hadn't seen the man's true appearance. As such, none dared to disobey him. As for taking revenge for the Fu Clan, the thought itself was a joke. Even if one had the capability, who would feud with a Nascent Soul cultivator over the mere Fu Clan?

The two hours passed by neither fast nor slowly.

During this time apart from a few whispers, screams of anguish occasionally came from the outside. They were curt and lasted only a moment. It was clear none in the Fu Clan castle was able to retaliate as they were killed.

The cultivators in the hall felt their heart tremble upon hearing these screams. Each of them guessed that the Fu Clan had offended an expert or great power and was being exterminated as a result. There were many in the hall that felt schadenfreude or pity for them.

After the time it took to finish the cup of tea, the screams in the

Fu Castle had ceased and the outside became as silent as within the hall. The guests then glanced at one another but none of them dared to act rashly.

Once the two hours had passed, the man's voice didn't return. In the end, one of the braver Core Formation cultivators decided to leave the hall and he safely left.

In the following moment, the other guests began to rush out with relief.

Chapter 655: Descendant

The Fu Clan Castle was entirely empty apart from a few bloodstains on the ground. It appeared that all of the direct lineage disciples of the Fu Clan had been exterminated and even their corpses were burnt to ash.

However, there were a few people that flew over on their magic tools and surveyed the entirety of the Fu Clan Castle, only to discover that the mortals and low grade external disciples of the Fu Clan were all unscathed. They even appeared to be completely ignorant of what had happened inside the castle. It seemed the attacker felt that killing off the direct lineage of the Fu Clan was enough to ensure its extinction.

Having just experienced that frightful affair, these cultivators naturally didn't dare to remain. A majority of vagrant cultivators immediately set off while a small portion of them temporarily stayed behind to have a whispered discussion before also departing.

The Fu Clan's extermination was an extremely important matter to both friendly and hostile powers. And with two Devilflame Sect Enforcers slain as well, the Devilflame Sect would now be forced to take action regardless of whether or not it was a Nascent Soul cultivator who had exterminated the Fu Clan!

The witnesses of this incident quickly brought the information back to their sects and clans as quickly as they could. These powers needed to prepare for the vast changes that would soon occur!

As the last few cultivators were hurriedly leaving the Fu Clan, many green-robed cultivators had arrived just outside the Purple Road Mountains. They were surprised to see that the restrictions protecting the Fu Clan Castle were unmanned.

At that moment, a few of the Fu Clan outer disciples entered the castle and discovered what was inside. These Qi Condensation

cultivators made a huge uproar and each of them had completely lost their minds to fear.

The many green-clothed cultivators that were waiting in the air looked at each other in dismay upon seeing the panicked low grade disciples.

The top clan in the State of Yuan Wu had met their end at the hands of a mysterious Nascent Soul cultivator. Word of this event spread throughout the entire cultivation world in the State of Yuan Wu, raising an uproar amongst the various powers.

With two of the Devilflame Sect Enforcers having perished during the Fu Clan extermination, the upper echelon of the Devilflame Sect flew into a humiliated rage, and sent out men to find the mysterious and vicious attacker who did this. They even stated that their own Nascent Soul Founder wouldn't allow this expert to run free.

However, those with sharper judgement would realize that the Devilflame Sect was merely putting on airs, and would most likely not take action. After all, according to the witnesses, the two Devilflame Sect Enforcers had recklessly taken the initiative to stand closely to a Fu Clan cultivator as the Nascent Soul cultivator was carrying out his revenge. It was merely bad luck.

Even if the Devilflame Sect was even more powerful and attempted to hunt down the murderer, cultivators weren't easily trapped or killed once they had reached Nascent Soul stage. They would need to dispatch four Nascent Soul cultivators of a similar grade or place down a fearsome restriction to even think of killing him.

Of course, the Devilflame Sect wasn't about to dispatch several Nascent Soul cultivators over revenge for a few Core Formation enforcers. Even if the sect was willing, the Nascent Soul eccentrics weren't about to take action over something so trivial.

Regardless of the declaration, a tremor swept through the

entirety of the State of Yuan Wu. The Fu Clan's spirit stones, marketplaces, and other holdings were divided up by several different powers.

However, this had nothing to do with Han Li. Unlike what other cultivators guessed, Han Li had remained inside the State of Yuan Wu for several days after the extermination was carried out. He was currently at an small, unremarkable mountain.

At the moment, he was floating in the air with his body enveloped in azure light, and was staring at the fog surrounding the mountain's center with a reminiscent expression.

"Over a hundred years have passed yet this place is still the same. Since the restrictions here still exist, could it be that other cultivators are living here now?" Han Li muttered with a calm expression.

After he had exterminated the Fu Clan cultivators with his black-tainted Gold Devouring Beetles, Han Li directly flew to Xin Ruyin's secluded mountain with the Fu Clan Ancestor's severed head in his possession.

In the past, he had made friends with Xin Ruyin and Qi Yunxiao. Now that he had taken revenge on their behalf, he planned on paying his respects at their graves and bringing the matter to a conclusion. However, he didn't anticipate that Xin Ruyin's former residence was being occupied by other cultivators. He couldn't help but wear a doubtful expression.

After some thought, Han Li's directly flew towards the mountain's restrictions. With his current cultivation and understanding of spell formations, the restrictions were incapable of stopping him.

As Han Li stood in front of the fog, he calmly flicked his fingers and shot many various colored magic seals into the restriction. Soon after, the mist roiled and revealed a small passageway that Han Li immediately flew through. A short moment later, the mist

disappeared and Han Li arrived before the residence that Xin Ruyin had personally built.

Glancing at the deep yellow bamboo buildings, Han Li felt a trace of nostalgia as well as a feeling of sadness at times long passed.

At that moment, a middle-aged woman walked out from a bamboo building. Her face still contained beauty and weak spiritual Qi fluctuations were emitted from her body. She was only a fourth layer Qi Condensation cultivator. When Han Li saw her, he couldn't help but frown. This woman gave him a familiar impression.

“Ah! Who... Who are you? How did you get in here?” The middle-aged woman spotted Han Li and couldn't help but shout in surprise. Soon after, she flusteredly took out two fire-red talismans from her waist and looked at Han Li with a hostile expression.

This was to be expected. This woman suddenly found an unfamiliar cultivator in a place that she had deemed to be completely secure. It was only natural for her to be alarmed and wary. Moreover, while this woman was unable to recognize Han Li's true cultivation with her meager power, she was able to feel that Han Li's magic power was profound beyond imagination. As such, she grew fearful.

Just as Han Li stroked his chin and planned to ask for the woman's identity, she suddenly shouted in pleasant surprise after closely examining Han Li, “Yi! Could it be Senior Han?”

Han Li was stunned when he heard this and revealed a trace of amazement. After muttering under his breath for a moment, he faintly realized something. He wore a friendly expression as he asked, “What relationship do you have with Xiao Mei? You look very similar to her.”

When the woman heard Han Li call out her ancestor's name, she realized she was correct and respectfully bowed, “Oh, Senior must be speaking of my ancestor! My ancestor passed away many years

ago. For the time being, this Junior is staying in Miss Xin's residence."

Han Li wryly smiled and said, "You're Servant Mei's descendant? To think that the silly little girl is now an ancestor." He then wore a puzzled expression and asked, "Still, how was it that you recognized me?"

The woman blushed and embarrassingly said, "In the past, my ancestor personally drew Senior's portrait. I've looked at this portrait since I was small. That is why I was able to recognize Senior at a glance."

"Oh! A portrait! I had no idea." A trace of amazement appeared on Han Li's face. He then curiously asked, "Could I take a look at it?"

"Of course, Senior. How about Senior first head inside? I'll bring it to you there." The woman stepped to the side and respectfully invited Han Li in.

After a moment of hesitation, Han Li walked into the bamboo building and noticed that the interior was unremarkable. But upon seeing that it was clean and well kept, Han Li nodded his head.

Once Han Li took a seat, the woman hastily steeped a pot of tea. Although it couldn't be compared to the spirit tea that Xin Ruyin once made, it was still pleasant and exceptional.

As he began to drink the tea, the woman excused herself and went to fetch the portrait.

Han Li casually swept his spiritual sense around and immediately spotted the woman. As expected, she was walking towards a pavilion.

The first floor of the pavilion was completely empty, but on the second floor Han Li saw a long wooden table. The table had two pitch-black memorial tablets that were inscribed with the names of Qi Yunxiao and Xin Ruyin.

When Han Li saw this, his heart grew dim while he recalled the smiles the two wore in the past. It was a pity the two had passed so long ago.

After the woman deeply saluted the memorial tablets, she took a rolled-up, foot-long scroll from the table drawer. She then hurriedly descended and ran directly towards Han Li's building.

Chapter 656: A Parting Gift

Han Li received the portrait and gently unrolled the scroll in his hand to reveal a meter long portrait of a smiling azure-robed man. It was a lifelike image of himself.

After taking a look at the scroll, Han Li sighed and rolled it back up.

After a moment of thought, Han Li stared at the woman and slowly asked, "Might I ask why your ancestor left behind a portrait of me? Is there a deeper meaning behind it?"

When the woman heard this, she wore a hesitant expression. With some thought, she carefully replied, "Senior Han, before Junior answers this question, may I ask whether or not you remember your promise with Miss Xin?"

"Of course I remember. You also know of the matter?" Han Li asked with a trace of astonishment.

With a heart filled with apprehension, the woman looked at Han Li and softly said, "In fact, Junior has continued to stay here in large part due to Senior. However, I hope you'll forgive me as I cannot speak forthrightly until your promise with Miss Xin is fulfilled."

Peng. Han Li expressionlessly tossed a wooden box onto the table from his storage pouch.

"This..." The woman felt her heart jump as she wasn't sure what Han Li intended.

Han Li calmly said, "There is no need for Fellow Daoist to be so flustered! The box contains the head of the Fu Clan Ancestor. The direct lineage of the Fu Clan have been exterminated, and only a few distant Fu Clan members remain. The Fu Clan no longer holds any power in the State of Yuan Wu. Is the promise considered fulfilled?"

The woman cried out in shock, “What? The Fu Clan Ancestor has already been killed?!”

She looked at the box with gritted teeth and opened the lid, filling the air with the scent of blood.

The woman’s face paled, but upon recognizing the face of the head, she smiled, “It truly is the Fu Clan Ancestor. Many years ago, I stealthily caught sight of the villain from a distance.”

Han Li smiled and said, “Because I killed him several days ago, word should’ve already spread. So long as you talk to someone you’re familiar with or go to a market city, you should be able to verify this.”

“Then Senior must’ve brought the head here to...”

“That’s right. I came to this old place to honor Miss Xin and Fellow Daoist Qi. I haven’t made many friends in my life and now that I’ve taken revenge on their behalf, I may as well follow it to completion.” Han Li’s voice grew sullen and his expression became earnest.

“When Miss Xin and Sir Qi learn of this in the underworld, they will certainly be pleased. Please wait for a moment, I will be right back.” The woman’s expression became dim, but something soon came to mind and she hurriedly left.

Han Li was baffled but nodded his head and watched as the woman rushed out of the room.

This time, the woman walked to a building in the back and began to dig below a tree, eventually taking a faint green jade box from within the dirt. She then carefully brought it back into the room and placed it on the table in front of Han Li.

“What’s this?” Han Li narrowed his eyes and waited for her explanation.

“Senior Han, before Miss Xin died from her illness, she left behind a message for my ancestor. She wished to give this box to

Senior if he managed to fulfill his promise and exterminate the Fu Clan. As a result, my ancestor remained here, as this would be the place Senior would make an appearance. Many years later, Senior hadn't yet returned and my ancestor passed this matter onto me. She even left behind a portrait of Senior so that we may recognize you. Now that you've personally arrived and fulfilled your promise, I will naturally act in accordance to Miss Xin's words and hand this item over to you. At long last, I am finally free of this burden."

The woman spoke serenely and her expression appeared relieved. It appeared this matter had weighed heavily on her mind.

Han Li felt moved as he gazed at the box on the table. He swept his spiritual sense past it and was somewhat astonished. He grabbed onto the box and opened it without any further reservations.

There was a faint azure jade slip sitting in the box with a yellow talisman attached to it, and silver lines of talisman characters faintly floated up from the box.

At that moment, the woman gazed at the jade slip with a curious expression.

Han Li raised his head and asked, "Hm? Has Fellow Daoist never seen this before?"

"I won't conceal this from Senior. Because Miss Xin hadn't left behind any words that restricted the protectors of the jade slip from looking at it, in a moment of curiosity my ancestor thought to take a look. But after reading it for just a short moment, she spat blood and lost consciousness for an entire day. Soon after, my ancestor used a high grade restriction talisman to restrict any of her descendants from reading it. Although I am quite curious, my cultivation is far inferior to my ancestor's when she was alive. I didn't dare to touch it."

Han Li nodded his head in response. He then blew a mist of azure

light onto the jade slip and effortlessly removed the talisman.

The woman was astonished by the sight. She had personally attempted to remove the talisman during an idle moment of curiosity, but her efforts had been completely in vain. However, Senior Han was able to remove the talisman with just a breath of spiritual Qi. His cultivation must be unfathomable.

Having heard that Han Li was a Foundation Establishment cultivator in the past and now he had been able to exterminate the Fu Clan and the Fu Clan Ancestor, his cultivation must be at late Core Formation stage at the very least. It was quite possible he was even at Nascent Soul stage. The woman felt awe emerge from her heart.

After looking through the jade slip, Han Li put it away in a flash of azure light. “Not bad. This jade slip is truly useful to me so I will be taking it. However, Fellow Daoist must’ve waited here for many years for me, and I feel regretful at the matter. Are you living here by yourself?”

Once the woman heard Han Li’s question, she grew excited and eagerly said, “Of course not. My husband is also a cultivator, but his aptitude is poor and his cultivation is similar to my own. However, my son Quanzi is young and his aptitude is not bad. However, he never had an expert’s guidance and was unable to enter a cultivation sect. If Senior could...”

Regardless of herself or her husband, so long as her son could become a disciple of this profound and mighty figure, it would be vastly beneficial. As such, she began to mutter her intentions in a roundabout manner in hopes that she wouldn’t offend him.

When Han Li heard this, he waved his arm and interrupted her, “There is no need to continue. I understand!”

In the woman’s alarm, Han Li calmly continued, “As you’re a descendant of Xiao Mei and have watched over this item for so long, while I cannot take him in as a disciple, I can bestow him a

Foundation Establishment Pill and two bottles of medicine pills useful for Qi Condensation cultivation. Your son's success in Foundation Establishment will depend on his own luck. Once he succeeds in Foundation Establishment, he should have no problem entering a cultivation clan or sect." Han Li took out three bottles and handed them over to the woman.

"A Foundation Establishment Pill?" The woman rejoiced and repeatedly uttered her thanks. Her previous disappointment had completely disappeared.

Then with a change of tone, Han Li asked, "Ah yes, when I exterminated the Fu Clan, I killed two Devilflame Sect cultivators in passing. Although I don't fear the Devilflame Sect, I don't wish to attract any trouble. Does anybody else know of this matter?"

As if aware of Han Li's worries, she hastily replied, "Senior, please be at ease. When my ancestor passed this matter onto me, no other outsiders were informed out of fear it would bring trouble to Senior. I have always been silent on this matter and mentioned this to neither my husband nor my son."

"Since you won't be wantonly speaking about this, I will be paying my respects to their memorial tablets before heading off." Han Li nodded with satisfaction and stood up.

"Ah, if Senior is about to leave, please wait a moment. My husband and my son will soon..."

Peng. Just as the woman stood up, white light flashed from behind her and she lost consciousness. Han Li had flung his sleeve as if he were already prepared for this and caught the woman in a mist of azure light.

At that moment, the white light behind her disappeared to reveal Silvermoon's fox body.

After glancing around, Silvermoon mysteriously smiled and said, "Master, why did you have me knock this woman unconscious. Do

you feel uneasy about something, or does she just catch your fancy?”

Chapter 657: Profound Nascent Formation Arts

Han Li appeared annoyed as he coldly snorted, “Drivel! I am neither suspicious of the woman nor do I hold malice towards her. However, it would be better for me to erase any memories of meeting me today. If any rumors were to leak, not only would it trouble me, but it would also attract calamity upon herself.”

With nothing else to say, his face glowed with azure light and he pressed his fingers against the woman’s head, employing the Profound Yin Art’s Dreamtear Technique. It would seal a few related memories and falsify them, causing this woman to believe that she managed to luckily acquire the medicine pills from a magnanimous expert. Any memories relating to Han Li would be completely sealed.

This soul altering secret technique was comparable to the Soul Control Technique and the Worryfree Needle [1], given that they were used by someone with far greater cultivation than his own.

However, this technique required that the user possess far greater cultivation than their target. Otherwise, the target would suffer great damage to their soul. As for Han Li, he had no problem using this technique on the woman as her cultivation was far too shallow.

A quarter of an hour later, Han Li was finished and the woman remained asleep.

After placing the woman back in her chair, Han Li took the opportunity to properly pay his respects to Qi Yunxiao and Xin Ruyin. He then turned the Fu Clan Ancestor’s head into ash and secretly left.

...

Back in her artifact spirit form, Silvermoon curiously asked,

“Master, what does the jade slip contain? Master seems to view it with great importance.”

Han Li quickly flew into the sky as he leisurely said, “It is a spell formation record from the age of antiquity that describes many grand and profound formations. Even with my current attainments in spell formations, it would take me quite some time to comprehend them. In addition to spell formations, there is a truly peculiar secret art I am quite interested in.”

“Secret art? With Master’s current knowledge and the entire set of the Profound Yin Arts, what secret arts could provoke your interest?” Silvermoon softly smiled, but her voice possessed a heavy curiosity.

Han Li smiled and said, “Have you ever heard of the outstanding reputation of the Three Truths Severance?”

Silvermoon’s laughter instantly ceased and her voice trembled with excitement as she asked, “Could it be that it holds the greatest Daoist Profound Art?”

“Of course not.” Han Li flatly denied.

“Oh? Then why did Master mention this divine art? Are you deliberately teasing me? Of course the Daoist Sects couldn’t possibly allow this heaven-defying art to leak! They themselves don’t even know if this technique is extinct!” Silvermoon grumbled.

“Although the jade slip’s secret technique isn’t the Three Truths Severance, it is a similar type of ability from the Devil Dao. It is called the Profound Nascent Formation Arts.” Han Li’s originally calm expression began to reveal excitement.

Silvermoon paused and said, “Profound Nascent Formation Arts! What kind of technique is that? It seems I’ve never heard of it before.”

“I’ve also never heard of this technique before. However, this

cultivation art is a genuine secret technique for cultivating a second primal soul. Later, one may even be able to nurture a second Nascent Soul.” Han Li’s tone became solemn at the end.

“A second Nascent Soul! Is this true? If that’s true, it would be considered a great divine technique at the very least, even if it is inferior to the Three Truths Severance!” Silvermoon’s spirits were greatly roused. The greater Han Li’s ability, the closer she would be to her objective.

Han Li’s surging emotions quickly turned calm once more. “I still don’t know if it is true. I’ll have to return to the Drifting Cloud Sect and carefully examine it once through. However, the spell formations recorded in the jade slip are genuine ancient formations. I have a few duplicates of them in a similar jade slip, so they shouldn’t be false.”

“Tch tch, Master’s luck is truly quite good for this technique to be directly delivered to you. However, secret Devil Dao arts may be powerful, but they always tend to favor hasty benefits at great cost later on. The greater the divine ability, the more obvious this becomes. It would be better for Master to have a proper look at this technique and see if there is anything amiss.”

Han Li soberly agreed, “I am aware, and it’s natural that I will be careful. If there is anything amiss about it, then I will forgo cultivating it.”

When Silvermoon heard him, she relaxed but soon appeared baffled as she asked, “Master, it doesn’t seem like you’re flying in the direction of the State of Xi. You aren’t planning to return to the Drifting Cloud Sect?”

Han Li sighed and said, “For the time being, I will not be returning to the State of Xi. I wish to take a visit to the State of Yue. After all, it is my birth country; I have a few secular attachments there that I must sever myself from. Otherwise, there will be worries weighing down on my mind that will interfere with

my future cultivation.”

After a moment of silence, Silvermoon agreed, “That is also good. At this stage, Master can only pursue the supreme Dao after he severs himself from all worries of the secular world.”

“That’s enough nonsense for now. I am going to travel as quickly as I can.” Han Li ended the conversation with a cold tone. He then enveloped himself in a streak of azure light and increased his speed by several times. In an instant, he disappeared without a trace.

Unknown to Han Li, in a place far away there were many green-clothed cultivators that were secretly searching through a forest. They each wore a terrified expression.

At that moment, a burly man spoke to the others in a tone filled with dread, “What can be done! It’s already been many days and there hasn’t been the slightest information on the Spirit Nascent. If we don’t find the Spirit Nascent within three months, the sect will send enforcers for us.”

A stern-eyed, middle-aged scholarly man said with an icy tone, “Humph! The declaration to find the Spirit Nascent in three months was merely said in a moment of anger. Everyone knows that recapturing the Wood Spirit Nascent was no longer a matter that a Foundation Establishment cultivator could handle. But if we don’t find even a trace of its whereabouts, I fear calamity will fall upon us all.

A green-robed woman with a common appearance fearfully said, “This matter wasn’t even our fault. It was Martial Uncle Ding, the guard of the Spirit Nascent, that sent us away and attempted to merge with the Spirit Nascent against orders. He even died from the backlash. Let’s hurry, the Spirit Nascent’s tracks have already vanished. Although we have a few magic tools to track and restrict it, the Spirit Nascent was far too quick, and we were unable to chase it down. Now that the Spirit Nascent is isolated from restrictions, we are even more hopeless.”

The scholarly man snorted and said, “Junior Martial Sister should leave those words for when an enforcer comes. Fortunately, Martial Aunt Han and Martial Aunt Liu will come to assist us. Those two Martial Aunts have wood spiritual roots. They should have some way of searching for it. However, I am quite curious how someone could possibly control something as fierce as the Wood Spirit Nascent without a special magic tool. It is truly inconceivable.”

“Enough. Regardless of who restricts the Spirit Nascent, we must find its whereabouts in order to save our own lives. Did you not hear the voice transmission that Martial Ancestor Kuang personally sent?”

The burly man frowned and revealed a trace of anxiety as he said, “Second Senior Martial Brother is right. It would be considered good if we manage to preserve our lives. However, the transportation formation along the way was broken and the two Martial Aunts will need two days to arrive at the next transportation formation. Do you think that the cultivator who captured the Spirit Nascent will have left the State of Yuan Wu during this time? After all, we don’t even know what country this cultivator is from.”

“Hehe! Junior Martial Brothers seems to not know. Martial Aunts Liu and Han were candidates to fuse with the Spirit Nascent. Many years before, they cultivated a secret technique in preparation to fuse with it, and are able to sense the direction of the Spirit Nascent from far away. The cultivator that restricted the Spirit Nascent won’t be able to escape the awareness of these Martial Aunts.” The old man spoke with a sullen tone, but his words seemed to hold confidence.

Once they heard the old man, the other three appeared relieved. However, the scholarly man’s eyes brightly flickered in thought and he asked, “Do you think that the person who captured the Spirit Nascent and the cultivator who exterminated the Fu Clan

are one and the same? Could chance truly have it that the Spirit Nascent just happened to be captured several days before the Fu Clan was exterminated? Could this person have realized that we had a relationship with the Fu Clan and exterminated them to prevent them from helping us?”

“Ninth Junior Martial Brother, you think too much. Even with such vast abilities, how could he possibly know that the Spirit Controlling Sect had a relationship with the Fu Clan. It was most likely just a coincidence,” the woman shook her head. But after some further thought, she became doubtful, “However, for there to be two Nascent Soul cultivators to appear in the same place isn’t very likely. Perhaps it truly is the same cultivator that has done this.”

“Oh! Could you perhaps tell us about this?” A young woman’s lazy voice came from the direction of a large tree. Then in a blur of white light, two beautiful white-clothed women appeared before them.

[1] The Soul Control Technique was used in chapter 293, only usable against mortals. The Worryfree Needle is a mortal technique that Han Li learned from Doctor Mo. Used in Chapter 203 against Han Yunzhi.

Chapter 658: Former Residences Spirit Well

The four green-robed cultivators were shocked upon seeing the two white-clothed woman that just appeared, but quickly rushed to salute them, “Martial Aunt Han! Martial Aunt Liu!”

The frail woman with a pale face and wide eyes softly said, “That’s enough. No need to be overly polite. Junior Martial Sister Liu and I have heard a bit of what you’ve said. Tell us about it and include all the details!” Her voice sounded otherworldly.

This woman was Han Yunzhi, a woman Han Li had encountered many times in the past [1]. Although her face was entirely the same as before, her body now appeared fragile and well-developed. Along with her beautiful body transformation, her cultivation had made great leaps as well, rising to early Core Formation.

“Many thanks, Martial Aunt Han. Martial Nephew will obey orders.” The old man in charge of the four green-clothed cultivators replied on the group’s behalf.

Han Yunzhi nodded with a smile and stepped forward. After finding a clean spot on the ground, she took a seat.

The other beauty had phoenix eyes and long eyebrows. She was a beautiful woman with a carefree expression. With a smile, she said, “Your crimes are not light. If you truly are incapable of finding the Spirit Nascent, I fear your master wouldn’t be able to plead for your lives!” Her words startled the female cultivator among the group of four.

The old man bitterly laughed and wore an earnest expression, “Martial Nephew knows that his guilt is inescapable, but we were truly treated unjustly. I hope Martial Aunts will be able to speak a few words to the Martial Ancestor in our favor.”

The woman stretched herself while her lips glistened as she spoke, “Oh? Then how about you give an explanation. The person

who restricted the Nascent Soul is now five hundred kilometers away and we won't be able to catch up to him anytime soon. We are in no hurry for now."

"Yes, when we brought the Spirit Nascent to the Kunmu Mountains, Martial Uncle Ding used an excuse..." The old man respectfully gave a detailed explanation of the Spirit Nascent's escape, the Spirit Nascent's later capture and the Fu Clan's extermination.

Han Yunzhi calmly listened, but her face remained completely still as if her heart was already steeled.

In contrast, the woman surnamed Liu occasionally revealed a curious expression and her gaze flickered as if she held great interest in the old man's words.

...

A streak of azure light flickered over the border between the State of Yuan Wu and the State of Yue.

According to information Han Li had acquired, the State of Yue had fallen under the rule of the Ghost Spirit Sect, and their headquarters were at the previous location of the Masked Moon Sect. As for the Tai Yue Mountains of Yellow Maple Valley, it had become the location of a side branch.

After Han Li entered the State of Yue, he flew straight in the direction of the Tai Yue Mountains.

"Nothing has changed!" As Han Li stood on a huge pile of rocks, he felt an expression of faint loneliness.

In the past, he had destroyed the mountain housing his previous cave residence over fear that the Devil Dao cultivators would discover it. Now that so many years had passed, it appeared to have become a desolate area. Of course, who could've possibly thought that there was a cultivator's residence concealed underneath the rubble?

After muttering to himself for a moment, Han Li raised his arm as his eyes flickered with white light. Several huge ape puppets were released that began to quickly clear away the rubble before them.

The puppets cleared away the rubble by blasting a path through it with various-colored beams of light, quickly clearing a way down towards the cave residence that lay beneath.

With a narrow passageway formed, Han Li ordered the puppets to stand guard as he flew inside.

The cave residence remained exactly the same as when he hastily left it. He couldn't make out any signs of entry, much to his relief.

He didn't come here solely for nostalgia but for the spirit well spring that was located in his hidden room.

Although he already had the jade spirit well as well as the highest ranked spirit well, the Spirit Well Tree, one always had more room for another Spirit Well. Although this spirit well was somewhat small, he naturally wished to bring it along with him since he was already in the State of Yue.

The spirit well spring was intact and emitting strands of white spiritual Qi. Han Li wore a complicated expression as he looked at the spirit well and unconsciously recalled when he had just entered the Foundation Establishment stage and how he discovered the spirit well when he carved out the cave residence. He vividly remembered it as if it had happened yesterday, raising all sorts of emotions in his heart.

Han Li remained in a daze for a short while before recollecting himself. He then grasped his hands in an incantation gesture and struck the spirit well with several magic seals, instantly causing it to glow brilliantly and quake the nearby ground.

Han Li then sat down with with an unchanged expression and formed a strange hand seal as he stared at the spirit well.

Water from the spirit well began to whirl as if an invisible hand was stirring it, causing the water surface to rise and form a profoundly deep black whirlpool. An astonishing wave of spiritual Qi spread throughout the room.

Han Li's expression stirred. This spiritual Qi was beyond what he had anticipated. But after a short moment, he recovered from his surprise and quickly began to resume the extraction.

The trembling of the nearby ground became increasingly severe and a blinding yellow light began to envelope the spirit well. This yellow light faintly deformed as the spirit well shrank and shined even more brilliantly.

A short moment later, the light faded away and Han Li let out a sigh. The deep yellow, fist-sized ball floated in the air. There was now a huge, pitch-black hole beneath it where the spirit well had been.

Han Li smiled upon seeing this, but his expression suddenly changed and became sullen. The puppets he had placed outside were under attack. Although they had not yet been destroyed, they were at a clear disadvantage and wouldn't last for long.

Han Li instantly took out a jade box and carefully placed the yellow ball inside. He then flew out as quickly as he could.

Once he arrived outside, he saw several black-clothed cultivators that had surrounded his ape puppets about a hundred meters away. A sullen, grey-clothed middle-aged man wore a puzzled expression as he observed the battle.

Han Li's sudden appearance instantly shocked the cultivators at the scene and the grey-clothed cultivator shouted for the attack to stop. The black-clothed cultivators hastily ceased their actions and withdrew to the man's side.

An azure light arrived in midair and faded away to reveal Han Li. He expressionlessly gazed at the several cultivators in silence and

revealed his Nascent Soul cultivation in an imposing manner.

The grey-clothed man glanced at Han Li and felt his heart drop. His shock was soon replaced by a smile, “Senior, please do not misunderstand. Us Juniors hold no malice. We merely felt that the spiritual Qi here became abnormal and we curiously thought to take a look. I am the Ghost Spirit Sect’s Yu Hun, disciple of Master Splintered Soul. We do not hold any bad intentions.”

“Master Splintered Soul!” Han Li frowned and felt as if this name sounded familiar. After a moment of thought, Han Li suddenly recalled something.

Wasn’t this the name of one of the Ghost Spirit Sect Nascent Soul eccentrics? He recalled that the Drifting Cloud Sect’s silver-haired old man had mentioned that this person was ruthless and wasn’t to be trifled with.

As Han Li’s mind wondered, the grey-clothed old man noticed that Han Li reacted to his master’s name and he grew far more at ease. However, he was still apprehensive and forced a smile, “Senior recognizes my master. Could he be an acquaintance of him? I must’ve acted far too rashly. I had no idea that Senior was handling business here, else I wouldn’t have dared to bother you. If there is anything that I may do to assist you, I will do my utmost to obey. Otherwise, I would like to ask for myself to be excused so that I may get out of your way.”

Although the grey-clothed man had an intimidating appearance, he was rather cunning and sly. After asking a few probing questions, he acted extremely deferential. In the end, the appearance of an unknown Nascent Soul cultivator had caused his back to run with cold sweat.

Han Li expressionlessly stared at the grey-clothed man and didn’t respond. Instead, he released his spiritual sense within the scope of a hundred meters and found that there were no other cultivators.

It seems that this party had truly discovered the nearby

disturbance by chance, and they had come alone. If that was the case...

Han Li suddenly felt an urge to kill.

Regardless of his previous identity as a Yellow Maple Valley cultivator, he was now a Drifting Cloud Sect elder; he couldn't possibly release these Ghost Spirit Sect cultivators from his grasp. In addition, the young master of the Ghost Spirit Sect had once nearly taken his life, and the stifled grudge was still buried within his heart.

There was also the fact that he had entered the State of Yue in secret. If his entrance to the State of Yue reached the ears of the Ghost Spirit Sect's eccentrics, he would attract their attention, producing nothing but trouble. He didn't wish for several Nascent Soul cultivators to chase him throughout the State of Yue.

"Yi! This person is..." Just as Han Li prepared his silent attack, an old man amongst the party of black-clothed cultivators suddenly cried out in shock at the sight of Han Li.

[1] Last seen at the end of the Trial of Blood and Fire in chapter 203 when Han Li removed her memories. They previously met when Han Li acquired the Golden Sincerity Brush from her.

Chapter 659: The Disciples of Splintered Soul

The Jing Province was located in the northwest of the State of Yue. Because it was a remote region, there were few cities but many small villages, and many small mountains and hills within the province's borders as well as many desolate areas few ever came across. As a result, the Jing Province was also home to far more bandits than other provinces, and was also where Jianghu Martial Artists lingered the most. While there had never been a great Jianghu faction that managed to unite the region, this area had produced many formidable characters. Bodyguards and caravan escorts rose in opposition to the many bandits.

One day, on the side of a desolate dirt road, a rather common scene in the Jing Province was taking place.

There were over a hundred brawny men wearing rough clothes, each with black scarves covering their heads, surrounding thirty azure-clothed men with various weapons. The azure-clothed men were in turn protecting the several carriages at their center. It was a scene of a group of bandits fighting a group of caravan escorts.

There were three black-clothed men with similar appearances standing at the bandit's rear. They coldly glanced at the scene with malice occasionally showing on their faces.

Near the carriages there were several men, young and old, wearing similar servant garbs. They each had a club in hand and wore nervous expressions. Inside the four carriages, there were many women and children wearing magnificent clothes, but the carriage at the very front had a calm middle-aged man wearing scholar's robes. With his long and glossy beard and mustache, he appeared to lack the strength to knock over even a chicken, but he possessed an indescribable air of authority. None that saw him dared to underestimate him.

The middle-aged scholar was sitting across from a man with blue embroidered robes and a thick, pointed mustache and beard. His arms were thick and he possessed a spirited gaze. He was a rarely seen peak Jianghu expert.

These obviously unordinary characters both wore calm expressions and were the only ones inside the large carriage. Although the two were silent, they were examining everything outside from the half-shut curtains, and occasionally heard bloody wails and clangs from the outside.

While the black-scarf bandits were great in number, the azure-clothed caravan guards and the servants were greater in skill. For a time, both sides found themselves in a deadlock.

The scholarly man smiled upon seeing this and spoke to the large man, "It seems there is no need to trouble Brother Li to take action. The Martial Sky Escort should be able to handle it!"

"Haha! If those three leaders of the black-scarf bandits don't take any action, it is only natural for the Martial Sky Escort to be able to deal with these small fry. But if the three black-scarf leaders were to attack, they wouldn't last. After all, the three leaders are renowned for their fierceness in the Jing Province. I heard they are brothers by blood and are experts in united techniques. Ordinary experts are no match for them." After the large man said this, his face faintly revealed a trace of excitement. He bent his stretched finger, producing loud cracks from his hand. It was clear the man was highly skilled in external martial arts.

When the scholarly man saw this, he unconsciously laughed, "Brother Li! Your eagerness to fight is exactly the same as your father!"

The large man responded with a helpless smile, "Little Brother Han, that is to be expected. Our Li Clan is one of martial heritage. If we come across an interesting opponent, it is only natural to wish to measure their might. It is just like how your Han Clan has

always been one of great literary repute, and how there is always one or two from your clan that manages to enter the imperial court as an official,” the large man then crossed his hands and said, “Still, I am quite puzzled as to how our Han and Li clans have managed to form such bonds despite having so little in common. This friendship has lasted deeply for many generations and has yet to fade with time!”

The scholarly man smiled and said, “Haha! In the past few days, I flipped through a few letters and unintentionally discovered a few events from the past. If Brother Li wishes to know about them, I can tell you about them, but I don’t know how much of it is true.”

When the large man surnamed Li heard this, he said with a curious expression, “Really? Our Li Clan has no custom of recording our ancestry. Apart from leaving behind a few martial teachings, there is little else left behind, let alone the history behind our clans’ friendship.”

The large man gazed into the distance and his expression changed, “Not good, those three leaders have decided to attack. We’ll have to put this off for now. Tell me about it after I take care of those three.” He then shot out of the carriage as if he were being launched from a crossbow.

Soon after, the large man’s howls of laughter could be heard, followed by mournful screams.

The scholarly man sighed and shook his head before closing the curtain. He didn’t feel the need to look outside as he held complete confidence in the large man.

After the time it took to finish a cup of tea, the sounds outside came to a sudden halt.

The carriage’s curtain fluttered for a moment, and the large man reappeared in the carriage with a blur. He appeared a bit worse for wear. His shoulder was bloodied as if he were slightly wounded, but nonetheless he heartily laughed to the scholarly man and said,

“Those three were truly skilled. They had to make me do quite a bit, but having witnessed my might, the black-scarf bandits have disappeared from the Jing Province.” The large man appeared to have enjoyed himself.

When the scholarly man heard this, he wore an apologetic expression, “If I hadn’t brought Brother Li along, I fear I would’ve passed onto the other side with this route being my place of death. Due to the great hatred those enemies hold for me, I was forced to involve Brother Li.”

The large man surnamed Li casually said, “What do you mean involve? The Li Clan steadily established themselves at the top of Jianghu only because of the Han Clan’s great assistance! Helping each other is by no means an external affair.”

“That is true, but I was merely being contrary.” The scholarly man’s smile was replaced with an expression of calm. It seemed he was one of flexible mind.

As the large man smeared a bottle of ointment on his back, he suddenly recalled the matter before the battle, “However, Brother Han, don’t forget to tell me about our clans’ past. I am quite curious about this!”

“Of course. When mentioning it, our clan’s friendship is quite unfathomable. Do you recall the Seven Mysteries Sect, the hegemon of the Jing Province many decades ago? Our ancestors were martial brothers inside this Jianghu faction. According to what was said in the letter, my great uncle was sworn brothers with your ancestor. Our clan’s friendship stemmed from their own friendship. It was also said, my great uncle was quite the formidable character. It was said...”

As the middle-aged scholar calmly spoke, the azure-clothed men buried the corpses from both sides and had the carriages move once more. The carriages soon grew distant and disappeared from the desolate road.

...

“Green Ox Village?”

Han Li floated a kilometer in the air with his body covered in azure light. He looked down at the village below with a trace of doubt.

Although this village was once pathetically small, only spanning a few kilometers in area, he was no longer able to draw any similarities to the streets that he remembered, but he did manage to remember its surroundings. It did seem to truly be his home village.

In his many years of absence, the village had turned into a bustling town. After staring at it from the sky, he hesitated for a moment before descending into a desolate alleyway under the guise of a concealment technique. Afterwards, he walked out of the alleyway with a swagger and slowly headed down the street.

Seeing the unfamiliar houses and buildings as he walked down the street, Han Li muttered to himself, “It is quite different!”

For some unknown reason, he knew that if he were to head west, he’d be able to see the forest and verdant mountain where he had spent his childhood. However, his steps grew hesitant and slow as he took in the vast changes that had occurred to Green Ox Village.

At that moment, Han Li’s expression was calm, but he hoped that he would soon find something familiar.

However, Han Li was only disappointed until he arrived at a three way intersection. He stopped and stared at a small shabby restaurant at the side of the road.

The restaurant was worn and only two stories high with a yellowish signboard that had the words “Spring Fragrance”. It was the restaurant that Han Li’s third uncle, Fatty Han, had once managed.

Han Li glanced at the restaurant and faintly remembered walking

through its sliding doors.

There was the round face of his third uncle, the narrow courtyard behind the restaurant, the dimly lit side room and the tasty food, the black carriage with the banner Seven Mysteries Sect, and many more memories began to clearly appear in Han Li's mind.

Han Li glanced at the restaurant with a complicated expression. A trace of sadness was betrayed within his eyes.

He stared at the restaurant for a moment before discovering that a few strangers on the road were glancing at him with an odd expression. It came as no surprise. A youth was motionlessly staring at an old shabby restaurant after all.

With a moment more of thought, he calmly walked into the restaurant with his hands held behind his back.

Chapter 660: Hometown

The Jing Province was located in the northwest of the State of Yue. Because it was a remote region, there were few cities but many small villages, and many small mountains and hills within the province's borders as well as many desolate areas few ever came across. As a result, the Jing Province was also home to far more bandits than other provinces, and was also where Jianghu Martial Artists lingered the most. While there had never been a great Jianghu faction that managed to unite the region, this area had produced many formidable characters. Bodyguards and caravan escorts rose in opposition to the many bandits.

One day, on the side of a desolate dirt road, a rather common scene in the Jing Province was taking place.

There were over a hundred brawny men wearing rough clothes, each with black scarves covering their heads, surrounding thirty azure-clothed men with various weapons. The azure-clothed men were in turn protecting the several carriages at their center. It was a scene of a group of bandits fighting a group of caravan escorts.

There were three black-clothed men with similar appearances standing at the bandit's rear. They coldly glanced at the scene with malice occasionally showing on their faces.

Near the carriages there were several men, young and old, wearing similar servant garbs. They each had a club in hand and wore nervous expressions. Inside the four carriages, there were many women and children wearing magnificent clothes, but the carriage at the very front had a calm middle-aged man wearing scholar's robes. With his long and glossy beard and mustache, he appeared to lack the strength to knock over even a chicken, but he possessed an indescribable air of authority. None that saw him dared to underestimate him.

The middle-aged scholar was sitting across from a man with blue

embroidered robes and a thick, pointed mustache and beard. His arms were thick and he possessed a spirited gaze. He was a rarely seen peak Jianghu expert.

These obviously unordinary characters both wore calm expressions and were the only ones inside the large carriage. Although the two were silent, they were examining everything outside from the half-shut curtains, and occasionally heard bloody wails and clangs from the outside.

While the black-scarf bandits were great in number, the azure-clothed caravan guards and the servants were greater in skill. For a time, both sides found themselves in a deadlock.

The scholarly man smiled upon seeing this and spoke to the large man, "It seems there is no need to trouble Brother Li to take action. The Martial Sky Escort should be able to handle it!"

"Haha! If those three leaders of the black-scarf bandits don't take any action, it is only natural for the Martial Sky Escort to be able to deal with these small fry. But if the three black-scarf leaders were to attack, they wouldn't last. After all, the three leaders are renowned for their fierceness in the Jing Province. I heard they are brothers by blood and are experts in united techniques. Ordinary experts are no match for them." After the large man said this, his face faintly revealed a trace of excitement. He bent his stretched finger, producing loud cracks from his hand. It was clear the man was highly skilled in external martial arts.

When the scholarly man saw this, he unconsciously laughed, "Brother Li! Your eagerness to fight is exactly the same as your father!"

The large man responded with a helpless smile, "Little Brother Han, that is to be expected. Our Li Clan is one of martial heritage. If we come across an interesting opponent, it is only natural to wish to measure their might. It is just like how your Han Clan has always been one of great literary repute, and how there is always

one or two from your clan that manages to enter the imperial court as an official,” the large man then crossed his hands and said, “Still, I am quite puzzled as to how our Han and Li clans have managed to form such bonds despite having so little in common. This friendship has lasted deeply for many generations and has yet to fade with time!”

The scholarly man smiled and said, “Haha! In the past few days, I flipped through a few letters and unintentionally discovered a few events from the past. If Brother Li wishes to know about them, I can tell you about them, but I don’t know how much of it is true.”

When the large man surnamed Li heard this, he said with a curious expression, “Really? Our Li Clan has no custom of recording our ancestry. Apart from leaving behind a few martial teachings, there is little else left behind, let alone the history behind our clans’ friendship.”

The large man gazed into the distance and his expression changed, “Not good, those three leaders have decided to attack. We’ll have to put this off for now. Tell me about it after I take care of those three.” He then shot out of the carriage as if he were being launched from a crossbow.

Soon after, the large man’s howls of laughter could be heard, followed by mournful screams.

The scholarly man sighed and shook his head before closing the curtain. He didn’t feel the need to look outside as he held complete confidence in the large man.

After the time it took to finish a cup of tea, the sounds outside came to a sudden halt.

The carriage’s curtain fluttered for a moment, and the large man reappeared in the carriage with a blur. He appeared a bit worse for wear. His shoulder was bloodied as if he were slightly wounded, but nonetheless he heartily laughed to the scholarly man and said, “Those three were truly skilled. They had to make me do quite a

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With a moment more of thought, he calmly walked into the restaurant with his hands held behind his back.

Chapter 661: Han Family Shrine

After entering the small restaurant, a sharply dressed waiter welcomed Han Li.

Han Li didn't head to the second floor and chose to sit in a remote corner of the first floor. He ordered a few dishes and silently observed everything that was occurring in the restaurant.

There were people from all backgrounds sitting on the first floor. It was as Han Li saw from other restaurants. Regardless whether it be hard laborers or small business merchants, they were all present. The only thing that stood out of place was the table full of burly men.

These six burly men were all effortlessly carrying a meter long cloth bag at their side. Han Li didn't need to use his spiritual sense to guess that they were blade weapons. From their similar uniforms, they clearly belonged to some sort of organization. However, this greatly aroused a feeling of familiarity from Han Li, recalling his days in the Seven Mysteries Sect.

He swept his spiritual sense past the people and he clearly heard their words. As expected, they were killers belonging to an organization. Han Li soon lost interest and turned his gaze to examine the others.

At that moment, two young scholars walked into the restaurant. They were walking slowly and were chatting with smiles on their faces.

"I heard that Assistant Minister Han had arrived back to the home village to pay his respects to his ancestors. Not only are grand characters of the province coming to pay an official visit, but the Fan and Li clans are also sending men over. It seems the Han Clan truly wish to have this matter to be bold and grand."

"Exactly so! I heard that for this ancestral offering, the Han Clan

sent out many letters summoning their side branch clansmen regardless of distance. Even the government officials of little repute are each sending men to pay their respects. From how I see it, the Han Clan, Fan Clan and Li Clan will soon because the three great families of the Jing Province.

“Tch tch! It is rather inconceivable that the Han Clan’s abrupt rise in power took place over a span of just over a hundred years!”

“What is so odd about that? Ever since a member in the Han Clan managed to rank first in the imperial exams, their rise in power was momentous. Each of their later descendants began to achieve great ranks in the imperial exams. With several generations of success, it is no wonder why they are currently so impressive. Still, it would be better for us to later...”

The two scholars casually sat down at a table next to Han Li.

‘The Han Clan!’ When Han Li heard them, he hastily thought to continue listening to them, but the two scholars quickly changed the subject and began to discuss literary works, much to Han Li’s annoyance. After some thought, he suddenly stood and walked towards the scholars.

“Brothers, my name is Han Li. Might I ask which Han Clan you were referring to? I’ve arrived here after receiving an invitation to pay my respects to the clan’s ancestors. However, I’ve grown up from a small countryside and am extremely unfamiliar with the main clan, nor do I do know where to pay my respects. Could you two brothers give me a few directions?”

The two scholars were stunned, but after seeing that Han Li also wore a scholar’s robes and spoke with refined words, the two replied without any suspicions, “So it turns out that brother is a Han Clan disciple! We’ve been quite rude. However, there is only one Han Clan, the Han Clan of the Three Kilometer Valley.

‘The Three Kilometer Valley!’ This entire area was the small village where the Han Clan once resided. Because the entire village

only spanned three kilometers over the mountains, it received this unsophisticated name. It seems the Han Clan they spoke of most likely were related to him.

With a calm expression, Han Li insipidly said, “If that’s the case, then this Han Clan is truly my own. Could you two tell me about the finer details of the clan? I’ve never participated in the clan’s ancestor offering. I’d rather not make a fool of myself.”

The two scholars glanced at each other and then examined Han Li. Feeling that he wasn't holding any ill intentions, he agreed, “This... we can only give a few general details. They are things that are known by everyone.

“Many thanks!” Han Li smiled.

One of the scholars began to speak, “If Brother is participating in the ancestral offering, it would be best for you to not immediately head to the Three Kilometer Valley. Several decades ago, the Han Clan have changed their location to the Han Clan Castle. They will only return to their ancestral home in Three Kilometer Valley on the day of the ancestor offering. The Han Clan...”

Han Li’s expression remained calm as he listened, but his heart stirred with excitement.

Four hours later, Han Li appeared above the verdant mountains of the past. He didn’t descend, merely glancing down below in silence.

Was this the same small village from the past?

The yellow earth roads, short walls, thatched hurts, and village children could no longer been seen. Instead, they were replaced with large courtyards, roofed buildings, pebbled roads, and well clothed servants. Not a single sign of the past remained.

Han Li shook his head at the sight and thought to depart when his gaze suddenly arrived at the building at the very center of the residence. This building wasn’t larger than the others, but it was

only building to have more than a single story. It was rather eye-catching.

The building's doors were closed shut and a pitch-black signboard appeared on the outside. The words "Han Clan Shrine" were written on it in silver paint.

A strange expression appeared on Han Li's face. After some thought, he reappeared in front of the building in a blur.

Several burly shrine attendants stood in front of the shrine, but with Han Li's invisibility technique, they were incapable of spotting him. He casually swept his gaze past them and entered without further thought.

Once he entered the shrine, he spotted rows of memorial tablets, numbering over several hundred. They were arranged on long tables and had empty spots on them for future generations.

After sweeping his gaze, he found many names, but none that he were familiar with. Without any further thought, he climbed to the second floor.

The memorial tablets on the second floor were clearly more grand and important. Not only was there many lit incense burners, there was also a huge cauldron at the center. It was filled with scented oil and had a huge candle wick that was brightly burning from it. It made for a solemn sight.

This time, Han Li blankly stood in place as he read the several memorial tablets at the center.

"Han Zhu, Han Tie, Han Tiansheng..." These familiar names were all coldly written on the pitch-black memorial tablets. Han Li's heart grew heavy and he found it difficult to breath.

As the saying goes, the great Dao was emotionless! However, that was only a self-deceiving lie. Han Li may be an Immortal from this land, he was incapable of severing his emotions. He was only able to bury them deep inside his heart.

Han Li eventually moved, slowly walking towards the memorial tablets at the center of the room. He stopped and expressionlessly stared at the memorial tablets as images of his close relatives began to continuously appear in his mind.

An unknown amount of time slowly passed by. The heavy sound of the opening building door woke Han Li up from his reminiscent mood. However, he merely stood in place without making any moves.

At that moment, the footsteps and voices of two middle-aged men could be heard.

“Brother Li, you are far too impatient. Didn’t I say that I would lend you the record for reading after the shrine visit? There is need to be so anxious!” This man spoke with a helpless tone.

In this person’s embarrassment, he responded, “Hehe! Esteemed Brother Han, who was it that had you mention that the later portion of the record had a set of nameless martial arts left behind by your ancestor? I am rather baffled as to why our Li Clan knows nothing of this matter despite the fact that our ancestors created it. It is only natural for me to wish to see it as soon as possible.

However, why is it that you enshrined the record? It would be an absolute shame for someone to steal it!”

The first voice sighed and spoke with a voice of complete confidence, “Who would possibly think of stealing something from a clan’s ancestral hall? While our Han Clan isn’t necessarily a nest of dangerous characters we have many skilled martial artists standing guard. Ordinary people wouldn’t even be able to approach it. Even if they succeeded, they would also have to fear our retaliation.”

“That’s true!” The other man agreed.

As the thuds became clear, a scholarly man and a man with thick facial hair appeared on the stairs of the second floor.

The two initially arrived with a smile, but after spotting Han Li, their expressions froze.

In their alarm, the large man stepped forward and covered the front of the middle-aged scholar. With a fluttering mustache and beard, he softly roared, “What a clever villain to think of waiting here in ambush, but you will not be leaving alive.” Once that was said, the man’s hands tightened into a fist and he ferociously pounced towards Han Li.

But before he arrived, a gale with astonishing pressure suppressed him.

Han Li remained motionless as he stood in place with his back facing them.

Chapter 662: Fourth Great Uncle

With a muffled thump, the large man's fist struck Han Li's back. The large man was stunned, but his face vastly changed upon seeing an azure light flicker from Han Li's body. As the man attempted to land another blow, he was sent flying.

The middle-aged scholar instantly revealed an expression of amazement.

Just as the large man's enormous frame fell, his body suddenly slowed and he landed on his feet as if he was light as a feather. He appeared completely uninjured.

"Brother Li, are you alright? Did you sustain any internal injuries?" Although the scholarly man possessed little strength, he knew there were many ways that Jianghu Martial Arts could injure without any external signs. As such, he revealed worry.

The large man surnamed Li took a deep breath and felt that his body had no injuries. He couldn't help but whisper in bewilderment, "It's nothing, I am fine. His skills are unfathomable, but it doesn't seem he's hostile."

When the scholarly man heard this, he nodded and felt slightly more at ease. He then turned his gaze to Han Li and serenely said, "Great warrior, I am the Han Clan Master, Han Tianxiao. Did this great warrior come here specifically for me?"

"The Han Clan Master?" Han Li slowly turned around.

"Ah, you..."

"Impossible!"

"Humph! What did your esteemed self mean by that?"

Before Han Li could speak, the scholar and the large man couldn't help but cry out in alarm upon seeing Han Li's appearance. The scholarly man soon thought of something and his

expression grew sullen.

After the large man recovered from his alarm, he also came to a realization and wore an ill expression.

“You recognize me?” Han Li asked with a frown. He glanced at the two and found that the two seemed faintly familiar. However, he left the matter alone with a wry smile in his heart.

The scholarly man stared at Han Li and deliberately said word by word, “Your esteemed self asks despite knowing the answer? Your appearance resembles that of our Han Clan’s Fourth Great Uncle. Why wouldn’t I recognize you?”

‘Fourth Great Uncle?’ When Han Li heard this, he wore a mysterious smile. Since he was the fourth eldest amongst his siblings, it was naturally referring to him. However, it was unclear how they would know of his current appearance since he hadn’t met face to face with any of his relatives ever since he left when he was small.

Han Li smiled and said, “Oh? When did I say that I was like your Fourth Great Uncle? Couldn’t this just be my natural appearance?”

The scholarly man quickly grew angry and he coldly said, “There are many similar faces in this world, but not only does your face bear a striking resemblance, here you are in the Han Clan’s ancestral hall. What else does that leave for your esteemed self?”

Han Li’s expression relaxed and he said with an impressed tone, “Your reply is spot on! You are worthy of being an official of the royal court. The Han Clan’s current prosperity is undoubtedly a result of the later generations’ efforts!”

A harsh expression flickered over the man’s face and he angrily said, “What? Does your esteemed self truly plan on pretending to be my ancestor?”

“Pretend? Why would I want to do that? How about you mention how you know of my appearance? I seem to recall that ever since I

left home, my family had never seen my appearance. Could it be the members of the Seven Mysteries Sect drew a portrait for you?" Han Li's gaze then dropped onto the large man with thick facial hair. He narrowed his eyes, eventually realizing why he found the man to be familiar. "Hm? Your surname is Li. Could you be related to Li Feiyu?"

The large man revealed furious alarm, "You... how do you know the name of my clan ancestor? It turns out you know quite a bit about my Li Clan!"

When Han Li heard this, he nonchalantly smiled.

The scholarly man was alarmed upon hearing the words 'Seven Mysteries Sect' and 'Li Feiyu'. He bewilderedly said, "Since your esteemed self repeatedly claims that you are my ancestor's younger brother, you must certainly know that our Han Clan's great uncle has disappeared. But now your esteemed self has shown up two hundred years later, but I fail to see any indication of your great age."

The scholarly man had only recently found out about the Han and Li Clan's history from a letter. Could it be that this person had also seen this letter?

With that thought, the scholarly man couldn't help but look at the table with the memorial tablets. The letter was hidden somewhere between them.

Seeing that the scholarly man's gaze grew odd, he swept past the memorial tablets with his spiritual sense and discovered the letter hidden within.

Han Li raised his hand without any reservations and beckoned towards the table.

The two men were dumbstruck by what happened next. Light flashed from the table and a yellow booklet enveloped in a mist of azure light flew out from the table towards Han Li.

Han Li grabbed the booklet and the light scattered with a faint shake of his hand. He then casually flipped through it.

As the scholarly man had long since been part of the bureaucracy, he was long accustomed to keeping his calm in the face of astonishing events. However, he couldn't help but dryly swallow in a panic as he glanced at the large man. The large man wasn't faring much better, but his expression grew odd as if it contained both happiness and fear.

While the scholar still felt confused, the large man cupped his hands and deeply bowed towards Han Li as he hesitantly said, "Might I ask if your esteemed self is an Immortal cultivator of legend? As an Immortal, you are unlikely to trifle with the affairs of us mortals. Would Senior happen to have any keepsakes to verify his identity? After all, this matter is rather significant. My Esteemed Brother Han and I cannot easily believe others based solely on words."

The scholarly man was stunned upon hearing the large man but the legends soon came to mind and he felt his blood run cold. He began to look at Han Li with an expression of awe.

"Oh! I didn't expect for you to know of Immortal cultivators! Impressive! From the record, it seems that you truly are Li Feiyu's descendant. Truly inconceivable for Li Feiyu's children to form a bond with my Han Clan! As for regards to keepsakes, I can't recall having any. At the time, I was in complete pursuit of the Dao and departed from my homeland in a hurry. I even left without bidding goodbye to Brother Li. I merely left behind a slip of paper for him and a few bottles of medicine pills." Han Li casually said.

The large man surnamed Li spoke with slight astonishment, "Medicine pills? Were the bottles that we enshrined at our sect's shrine left behind by Senior?"

Han Li sighed and dimly said, "Long ago, your ancestor used Essence Extraction Pills without any hesitation in order to excel in

martial arts. Even with the medicines I left behind, I fear he wouldn't have been able to live to an old age."

After a moment of hesitation, the large man carefully said, "I don't know of this matter. However, my father still lives and perhaps he might know something of the deceased ancestor. After all, these secret matters are only known by each generation's clan lord. If Senior will allow it, I will quickly send word to inquire whether or not these words are true."

At that moment, he was already mostly convinced. The Li Clan's establishing ancestor had met with an untimely death at an early age.

Han Li waved his arm and spoke with a tone of melancholy, "There is no need. I didn't come back to make a disturbance. I merely wished to free my mind of mortal worries. Now that I see both the Han Clan and the descendants of my dear friend are doing well, I am well at ease."

Having heard this, the large man instead became nervous and began to wildly signal to the scholarly man with his eyes. He clearly knew what it meant to the Han and Li Clans to have an Immortal cultivator ancestor.

The scholarly man naturally knew far better of what there was to gain or lose from this. After pondering for a moment, he respectfully said, "If your esteemed self is truly my great uncle, I have a method of immediately verifying your identity. Our Han Clan Shrine contains a few possessions of our ancestors from the past. If Senior is able to identify these items, Junior will naturally be convinced of your background. Only the Han Clan Master from each generation is qualified to personally care for them, and they are incapable of being identified by others."

"Past possessions? Let's take a look at them. It's only that I left home at a rather early age so I may not be able to identify them." Han Li indifferently said. If it wasn't too troublesome, he definitely

wouldn't refuse to be recognized by the descendants of the Han Clan.

"Please be at ease Senior. These items were left behind as keepsakes from their times of poverty, so Senior should be able to recognize them. I will bring them now." After bowing to Han Li, the scholar descended from the second floor.

After a bit of clamor from down below, the scholarly man shortly walked back up with a tray covered by red cloth. He then respectfully presented it to Han Li.

Han Li took the plate and removed the red cloth, revealing the worn items before him.

Han Li spoke with pleasant surprise, "Oh! So it turned out to be these items. I didn't expect to see them again in this lifetime."

"Senior recognizes these items?" The scholar cautiously asked with a nervous expression.

"I know a majority of these items, but there were three that were acquired after I left home. I don't know who they belong to. The slingshot and small bow belonged to my second elder brother Han Tie. He enjoyed playing with them when he was small. The wooden hairpin was my mother's most cherished possession. The tobacco pipe was..." Han Li picked up each of these items and spoke as if he were rather familiar with them.

After hearing Han Li examine half of them, the scholar felt there was no longer any doubt.

Without waiting for Han Li to finish, he immediately dragged the large man forward and they deeply saluted to Han Li.

"This unfilial descendant Han Tianxiao recognizes Fourth Great Uncle. I sincerely wish that Great Uncle will forgive my unfilial actions from before." With that said, the scholar didn't dare to meet Han Li's gaze and wore an expression of embarrassment.

The large man mirrored the solemn and respectful display.

Chapter 663: Gold Devouring Spirit Sword

When the two acknowledged Han Li, he felt an indescribable feeling well up inside him. After a moment of silence, he slowly said, “On the year I left the village to pursue the Dao, I didn’t expect for the Han Clan to become such an influential clan. It seems the saying is true. The affairs of the world are truly hard to predict! Stand up, you two. With the many years I haven’t returned home, I can be considered a complete stranger to the Han Clan. There is no need to be so polite.”

The middle-aged scholar stood up and spoke with great reverence, “Great Uncle’s words are untrue. Had we unfilial descendants known that you were still alive, we would’ve certainly sent men to fulfill our filial duties.”

Han Li waved his arm and calmly said, “Filial duties! There is no need. I’ve come only to take a look. I won’t be staying long. As a pursuer of Immortality, it is better for me to have fewer ties to the mortal world.”

The scholar spoke with alarm, “Great Uncle, you are leaving so soon? Will you not stay awhile and take a look at the other Han Clan juniors in the castle?”

Han Li sighed and regretfully said, “When I arrived, I flew over the Han Clan Castle and swept my spiritual sense past everyone inside. Unfortunately, while there are many Han Clan members none of them possess any spiritual roots. They have no fate with me. Otherwise, I wouldn’t mind taking one or two clan descendants along with me on the path of cultivation.”

A trace of disappointment appeared on the scholar’s face as he bitterly smiled, “It seems despite our clan’s prosperity, none have the fate to follow Great Uncle on the path of Immortality.”

Han Li shook his head and said, “Only those who possess spiritual roots may become Immortal cultivators. Such a person might not

even appear once among ten thousand. For the several hundred Han Clan members to possess no spiritual roots is to be expected. Besides, from the way I see it, it would still be better for the Li and Han Clan to remain out of the cultivation world. As of current, the cultivation world is chaotic where even entire clan exterminations are possible. It would be terrible if the Han Clan were to be implicated.”

The scholar was initially surprised and sincerely replied, “This one acknowledges all Fourth Great Uncle has said.”

Han Li’s gaze then turned to the large man with thick facial hair, “Which generation of Li Feiyu’s descendants are you? What’s your name?”

The large man hurriedly bowed his head and replied, “Junior is Li Feng. I am an eleventh generation descendant of Li Feiyu. I pay my respects to Great Uncle Han.”

“Given the close relationship I had with Lei Feiyu back then, I find it acceptable for you to call me ‘Great Uncle’. You were rather protective of Tianxiao just now. It seems in these past years the Li Clan has shown our Han Clan much consideration. As the younger brother of the Han Clan Ancestor, I naturally won’t treat you unfairly. Here are some medicine pills, they will be of great use to martial artists. They will be able to save your Li Clan youth much effort in their cultivation of inner strength. Accept them for the time being.” Han Li slapped his storage pouch and took eight various colored bottles into his hands before offering them to the large man.

The large man was overjoyed and hastily accepted the small bottles with repeated thanks. Although Jianghu Martial Artists cultivated inner strength and it wasn’t as drawn out as cultivation spiritual power, they spent much of their youth in dedication to this pursuit. With these medicine pills, a large number of experts would emerge from the Li Clan.

The middle-aged scholar felt happy for his good friend, but his gaze towards Han Li unconsciously revealed a slight hint of expectation as well.

When Han Li saw this, he faintly smiled and calmly took a spirit beast pouch off from his waist and lightly slapped it. A short moment later, over a thousand black-tainted Gold Devouring Beetles were released and formed a dazzling three-meter-wide cloud of black, silver and gold. It appeared almost as if specks of sunlight had appeared before them.

The scholar and the large man were left completely amazed.

Without any further words, he pointed to the insect swarm above him and had them concentrate into a tri-colored sword. Han Li then extended his arm and had the sword fall into his hand with a buzz.

This strange scene left the two at an even greater loss for words.

Han Li caressed the sword while his expression wavered for a long while. Then with a sigh, he spat an azure mist onto the sword. In a flash of azure light, a simple green scabbard appeared on the sword's blade. Han Li then horizontally held the sword in front of him with both his hands and took out a piece of fine, polished jade.

Han Li gravely said, "This sword is something I refined from spirit beetles. It is capable of killing others of its own accord. I will be leaving it inside the clan shrine in case the Han Clan one day faces extermination. The Han Clan will be able to hide inside the shine and rely on this sword to escape calamity. However, you had best remember that this sword isn't something that I personally control. Once the sword is drawn, anybody outside of the ancestral shrine that is within a five kilometer radius will be killed. As such, you must treat it with the utmost caution.

This is a jade pendant that holds a sliver of my essence. Without it, the sword cannot be drawn. Leave the jade pendant in the care of the Han Clan's later generation clan lords."

Having seen this inconceivable event occur before him, the scholar no longer held a trace of doubt towards Han Li. He hastily replied with delighted surprise, “This nephew will commit Great Uncle’s instructions to memory!”

Han Li smiled in response, but he didn’t immediately hand over the sword and the jade pendant. Instead, he continued speaking with a solemn tone, “There is something else you must remember. Because the scabbard sealing the sword is made from spiritual Qi, the Gold Devouring Sword may only be drawn three times. The scabbard will thin with each use and disappear on the third. Afterwards, the sword will turn back into spirit beetles and disappear. I’m sure that giving the Han Clan three opportunities to escape calamity is a worthy gift as your ancestor’s younger brother. After all, there are no fortunes in this world that last eternally. In order to prevent the sword from being used for any evil intentions or opportunistic tricks, the sword will be incapable of leaving the ancestral shrine while it is sheathed. Else, it will disappear from existence. As such, I hope you will properly use this sword to allow the Han Clan to flourish for many years to come. Even if the Han Clan were to later return to their status as commoners, that wouldn’t necessarily be a bad thing.”

Once that was said, Han Li handed the sword and jade piece over to the scholar.

The scholar repeatedly uttered his thanks and accepted the items with a bowed head. He carefully placed them at the center of the memorial table before returning to await further instructions from Han Li.

Han Li was rather satisfied by the scholar’s deferential attitude. After some thought, he took out two faint yellow medicine pills and handed one to both the scholar and the large man. He smiled upon seeing their surprise and said, “Those two items were left for the Han and Li clans. Since you two are also my juniors and have personally recognized me as your great uncle, it can be considered

that you have some fate with me. I will also give you two a few benefits as well. While these two bottles of medicine pills have no effect on me, they will extend the lifespan of mortals who take them and strengthen their bodies. When you two take them, you will both live to at least a hundred years.”

“Many thanks Fourth Great Uncle!”

“Many thanks Great Uncle Han!”

When the scholar and the large man heard this, they accepted the small bottles with repeated thanks. They both appeared pleased beyond expectation.

Han Li nodded his head and took another look around. Then with a curious expression, he asked, “From how you two recognized me, it seems there should be a portrait of me left behind. If it is in the ancestral shrine, could you let me take a look at it and tell me who drew it?”

The scholar immediately replied, “The portrait is actually on this floor. Please wait a moment.”

He walked up to what seemed to be a common wall and gave it a push. With a creak and a thud, a portion of the wall flipped over to reveal six suspended silk portraits.

Han Li stepped forward and examined the portraits with complete stillness. He saw the image of a smiling seventeen year old youth. It was a portrait of Han Li from long ago.

The middle-aged scholar stood behind Han Li and gave an explanation with a soft voice, “It was said that this portrait was given to our Han Clan by the deceased Li Clan Ancestor. However, no one knows of its creator.”

As if he hadn’t heard, Han Li’s gaze shifted several times and it fell on to a portrait of Han Li’s father wearing noble clothing. Although he appeared far more aged than when Han Li left the village, he appeared completely happy.

A trace of sadness appeared on Han Li's face. He then swept his gaze past each of the other portraits.

The other portraits where all of white-haired old men. It took him quite some effort before he could match their appearances with his brothers as he remembered them. He felt a flood of emotions storm within his heart as he stood in place.

The scholar and the large man both tactfully kept silent. Some time later, Han Li began to mutter to himself in a whisper.

The two wished to hear what he had to say, but the two were blinded by a sudden surge of azure light. By the time they refocused their gaze, Han Li could no longer been seen, but his voice echoed in their ears.

“Although I am a rather capable Immortal on this continent, I also have many ferocious enemies. Do not speak of today's matters with anyone else. So long as this matter does not spread and you do not allow the Gold Devouring Spirit Sword to be seen by outsiders, those from the Immortal world will pay you no notice and will not bother you. I will now absorb myself in the pursuit of the Great Dao and Immortality, so I won't be involved with the affairs of the Han Clan. Take care of yourselves!”

Once that was said, Han Li's voice came to an abrupt end, leaving behind what seemed to be echoes.

The scholar and the large man were left staring at each other in dismay.

Chapter 664: Exposed Tracks

By the time the last word was spoken, Han Li was already ten kilometers away from the Three Kilometer Valley while flying across the sky in a streak of azure light.

Although he had something of a relationship with the Han Clan members, he had always viewed his true family to be his parents and siblings. Although the scholar and the large man had treated him with great respect, Han Li felt no real intimacy towards them. After all, the distance of many generations and the vast changes to Green Ox Village and the Three Kilometer Valley caused Han Li to strongly feel as if he were an outsider.

However, this trip to his hometown had weakened the last worries he held in his heart. He was sure that with the passage of time, these worries would truly disappear and his distant ties with these descendants would truly fade away.

As such, Han Li quickly gained his bearings and set off.

Several days later, Han Li passed through the Lan Province, specifically making a detour at Jia Yuan City. Little had changed about the city apart from its inhabitants.

Not only did Sun Ergou and the Fourth Level Gang disappear, but even the Rainbow Sect had disappeared over a hundred years prior. It had been replaced with a newly emerged gang by the name of the United Heavens Union.

If he remembered correctly, the Rainbow Sect had had the backing of Spirit Beast Mountain in the past, but at the climax of the war with the Devil Dao, Spirit Beast Mountain defected to the Controlling Spirit Sect. Now that the State of Yue was under the control of the Ghost Spirit Sect, the fall of the Rainbow Sect came as no surprise.

Additionally, he had no idea if Mo Yuzhu or her daughter had

met with any mishaps. It was a pity that so many years had passed as even if Han Li asked around, there would be no information to be found.

Han Li could only sigh and hurriedly depart.

As for Sun Ergou, he didn't manage to find any information on his clan. Han Li didn't mind this in particular since he didn't hold them in much regard. Although he had given Sun Ergou many benefits, Han Li had received little in return.

As such, Han Li left the city of Jia Yuan and thought to fly in the direction of the State of Yuan Wu. Once he passed through the State of Yuan Wu, he planned on returning to the Drifting Cloud Sect. But half a day after he departed Jia Yuan City, his expression froze and he stopped in mid air.

He turned his head and gazed into the distance. He couldn't help but narrow his eyes.

At that moment, a party of cultivators suddenly stopped a hundred kilometers away. The two white-clothed woman hesitantly glanced at each other as their expressions grew heavy.

The old man standing behind them nervously asked, "Martial Aunts, did something happen?"

"Yes, I just felt the Spirit Nascent's position suddenly stop. I don't know whether or not we've been discovered." The sharp-eyed, white-clothed woman surnamed Liu no longer wore her normal lazy expression which had been replaced with an incisive air.

The burly man spoke with an odd expression, "That's impossible. Even a Nascent Soul cultivator cannot sense something at this distance. Could it be that Martial Aunt's secret technique disturbed the Spirit Nascent and alerted him?"

The woman surnamed Liu shook her head and firmly said, "That can't be. Our technique was something that was passed down by

your Martial Ancestor. It only allows for the one-sided detection of the Wood Spirit Nascent. So long as the other party hasn't yet reached late Nascent Soul stage, he shouldn't be able to perceive anything strange. After all, it would be considered fearsome for Nascent Soul cultivators to see within even a fifty kilometer radius, even if their spiritual sense was exceptionally powerful. Could it be that we are chasing after a late Nascent Soul eccentric?"

The green-clothed woman amongst the four Foundation Establishment cultivators seemed to have thought of something and worriedly said, "But Martial Aunt Liu, why is it..."

Suddenly, Han Yunzhi broke her silence as she was tracing the Spirit Nascent's location and spoke with an alarmed expression, "Not good! The Spirit Nascent's position is moving towards us!"

"What? Its coming over in our direction? Has that cultivator truly discovered us?" The woman surnamed Liu turned pale and she hastily clutched her hands in an incantation gesture. After a short moment, the woman grimaced and spoke with certainty, "The cultivator who restricted the Spirit Nascent is indeed moving towards us at an extraordinary speed. He is certain to be a Nascent Soul cultivator."

After muttering to herself for a moment, Han Yunzhi slowly said, "Quickly run! Fighting means certain death. I recall that a branch of the Ghost Spirit Sect is located in the nearby Lan Province. Let's flee there. Although we do not get along well, we are still on the same side. We will draw on the support of their spell formations to fight this unknown Nascent Soul cultivator.

Besides, the Nascent Soul cultivator might not necessarily dare to brazenly attack the Ghost Spirit Sect branch. It will greatly increase our chance of escaping."

"Martial Aunt Han speaks true. Let us quickly go, or else it will be too late!" When the large man heard that a Nascent Soul cultivator was about to arrive, he felt his mouth turn dry in alarm.

The woman surnamed Liu raised her eyebrows and coldly glanced at the large man, “Humph! Panicking and spouting unnecessary words. We will use the Spirit Joining Arts to combine our magic power into one. This way, we will increase our speed by nearly half. Let us hurry!”

The large man felt his heart drop and he didn’t dare to say any more.

Under the lead of Han Yunzhi and Cultivator Liu, the six immediately made use of the Spirit Joining Arts and flew off on their magic treasures and tools as a single streak of yellow light. With their united spiritual Qi, their speed was amazingly fast.

At that moment, Han Li immediately noticed this and his expression grew sullen as he flew forward at full speed.

Han Li didn’t entirely understand just how powerful his spiritual sense currently was. He merely knew that by utilizing the fourth layer of the Great Development Technique, his spiritual sense was able to envelop a fifty kilometer radius around himself. Past that, he wouldn’t be able to observe anything in detail. He would only have a vague observation of anything within a hundred fifty kilometers.

A moment ago, Han Li suddenly felt a sliver of strange, concealed spiritual power linger near his body that had greatly alarmed him. Ordinary Nascent Soul cultivators wouldn’t have been able to easily detect it with their spiritual sense.

Although he didn’t know exactly what this was, Han Li knew that trouble had arrived at his door. He guessed that it was more so the matter that he had casually tidied up with the Ghost Spirit Sect rather than his extermination of the Fu Clan back in the State of Yuan Wu.

As a result of this discovery, Han Li spread out his spiritual sense and discovered that a hundred kilometers behind him there was a party of several cultivators that were stealthily following him.

Although it was too far away for him to clearly see their faces, Han Li surged with killing intent and flew towards their direction without any hesitation.

As cultivators that were capable of tracking him, he absolutely couldn't allow them to continue following him. Eradicating them would prevent future troubles. And since there were only two Core Formation cultivators in their party, it should prove to be an easy affair.

In the following instant, a dazzling thirty-meter-long streak of azure light quickly chased after a dense beam of yellow light, producing waves of clear rings from their wake.

In only a short moment, Han Li had already closed the gap by fifty kilometers. When cultivator Liu sporadically detected Han Li's position through her techniques, she couldn't help but grow pale in terror.

At this speed, the six wouldn't even reach half the distance to the Ghost Spirit Sect branch before being chased down by the Nascent Soul cultivator.

With great worry, the woman turned her head to Han Yunzhi and thought to discuss further plans to flee when Han Yunzhi suddenly smiled and whispered, "Quickly, look ahead. There is a party of Ghost Spirit Sect cultivators that seem to be heading towards us."

"Ghost Spirit Sect cultivators?"

Han Yunzhi's soft voice roused the spirits of not only Cultivator Liu but the other four Foundation Establishment cultivators as well. Although they didn't dare to imagine that they would have enough strength to fight a Nascent Soul cultivator, they would be able to assist them in buying more time.

As expected, they soon saw over ten black dots approach them from the distance.

Cultivator Liu felt somewhat at ease when she saw them. Nevertheless, she snuck a glance at Han Yunzhi, shaken that her Senior Martial Sister Liu had discovered the Ghost Spirit Sect cultivators far earlier than she had.

Since there was only one Wood Spirit Nascent, they were actually rivals despite their appearance as martial sisters. While they would ordinarily call each other martial sisters with great familiarity, they felt a great competitive spirit in their hearts hoping for the opportunity to fuse with the Wood Spirit Nascent. It was only natural to covet an opportunity to reach for greater heights.

At that moment, the six had arrived before the party of Ghost Spirit Sect cultivators and scattered the spiritual Qi around them to reveal their true appearances. The Ghost Spirit Sect cultivators had long discovered the Controlling Spirit Sect cultivators. Although they didn't take any malicious actions, they each assumed a cautious attitude.

“Yi! Isn't it Junior Martial Sisters Han and Liu from the Controlling Spirit Sect? A truly rare visit indeed for you to have arrived at the State of Yue!” A surprised voice spoke out from among the black-clothed Ghost Spirit Sect cultivators. Three Core Formation cultivators then walked out from the group, two men and one woman.

Chapter 665: Alarmed Escape

These three Ghost Spirit Sect cultivators consisted of a black-clothed man with a resolute appearance, an embroidered-robed scholar with flickering eyes, and a middle-aged woman who still retained the beauty of her youth.

When the woman surnamed Liu saw the three disciples of Master Splintered Soul, she sweetly smiled, “Senior Martial Brother Xun! So it turned out to be the disciples of Senior Splintered Soul. How timely.”

But when the three black-robed cultivators heard this, they coldly examined them and their expressions grew sullen. The woman amongst the three wore an unfriendly expression and asked, “Timely? Why have our two Junior Martial Sisters from the Controlling Spirit Sect snuck into our State of Yue? Could it be you hold our Ghost Spirit Sect in contempt?”

Cultivator Liu explained with a smile, “Senior Martial Sister misunderstands, Senior Martial Sister Han and I came to the State of Yue under orders from our Sect Ancestor. Because the matter was urgent and couldn't be delayed, we were unable to inform your esteemed sect of the matter. Moreover, we've only arrived in the State of Yue for a few days. We had no intentions of neglecting your sect.”

The black-clothed cultivator stared at Cultivator Liu and expressionlessly asked, “Regardless of why you've arrived at the State of Yue, there is only one question we wish to ask you. Did you take anything from the Tai Yue Mountains a few days ago?”

Han Yunzhi frowned and an odd expression appeared on her face, “The Tai Yue Mountains? The mountain range that originally belonged to Yellow Maple Valley?”

“Hm? Did you two Junior Martial Sisters truly pass by there?” Although the black-robed cultivator's expression remained calm, a

cold glint appeared within his eyes. The embroidered-robed scholar's and the woman's expressions tensed, their faces revealing traces of hostility.

When Han Yunzhi and Cultivator Liu saw this, they unconsciously exchanged glances.

The two weren't fools. It was clear the other party revealed hostility. However, the party of Controlling Spirit Sect cultivators truly hadn't entered the Tai Yue Mountains. They merely probed the Spirit Nascent's position from a distance and discovered that the cultivator who captured it seemed to have stayed at the Tai Yue Mountains for half a day.

Cultivator Liu's gaze flickered for a moment and she probingly said, "We hadn't crossed through the Tai Yue Mountains. However, the cultivator that is fifty kilometers behind us had crossed through the Tai Yue Mountains. It did seem that person was there during that time. Could Senior Martial Brother Xun be looking for him?"

The embroidered-robed scholar boldly stared at the two women and suddenly smiled, "Fifty kilometers behind you? Are you making this up? How did you know that person stayed at the Tai Yue Mountains? Could he be a cultivator of your sect?"

Cultivator Liu blushed and spoke with luminous eyes, "Senior Martial Brother Que must be joking. How could we dare to so brazenly lie to our Senior Martial Disciples while we are in the State of Yue? If you don't believe me then this Junior Martial Sister will make a heavenly pledge to answer your questions. You should now know my answers to be true! We don't know this person. As for how we know of the matter with the Tai Yue Mountains, it's a bit complicated. Since this little sister has urgent matters to attend to, I would rather give you Senior Martial Brothers a more thorough explanation on another day." As she spoke, she revealed a flirtatious charm that seemed to stun the scholar.

The black-clothed cultivator frowned after seeing her expression and grew doubtful. After muttering to himself for a moment, his expression relaxed and he calmly said, “Were this an ordinary matter, I would believe you without doubt. However, our Sixth Junior Martial Brother and his disciples were exterminated in the Tai Yue Mountains and not even a speck of dust remained. My master was enraged by this and assigned us to investigate any high grade cultivators that had recently entered the State of Yue. Since the movements of Junior Martial Sister’s party are rather strange, would it not be better for us to confront this cultivator together? I wish to hear this cultivator’s story. If he is truly the killer of our Sixth Junior Martial Brother, we will greatly thank you two.” The black-clothed cultivator then rigidly stared at the party of Controlling Spirit Sect cultivators.

“Confront?” Cultivator Liu’s expression grew unsightly.

“What? Are you two Junior Martial Sisters too busy to help us?” The black-clothed cultivator seemed to speak lightly of the matter but the group of Ghost Spirit Sect cultivators behind them all formed a semicircle blocking their front. It appeared that if the Controlling Spirit Sect cultivators didn’t agree, they would be attacked.

Upon seeing this, Cultivator Liu’s expression changed and she thought to say something, but suddenly, she turned her head around with fright.

It wasn’t just this woman, but all the cultivators present felt an icy spiritual sense suddenly sweep over them, enveloping them all within it.

Although the spiritual sense’s owner wasn’t yet seen, they unmistakably felt a harsh bone-chilling intent.

In furious alarm, the middle-aged woman couldn’t help but shout, “A Nascent Soul cultivator! The person you spoke of was actually a Nascent Soul cultivator! You wanted to lead us to our

deaths!”

“Cut the rubbish! Immediately flee! Everyone escape if you can!” Although the black-robed man surnamed Xun was also furious, he knew that now was not the time to pursue the matter. As soon as he finished speaking, he immediately flew off as a streak of black light.

In the embroidered-robed scholar’s alarm, he hesitantly said, “That person isn’t necessarily the killer of Sixth Junior Martial Brother. There is no need to fear him.”

The woman snorted and coldly said, “If Senior Martial Brother wishes to leave his life at the mercy of others, then please forgive your Junior Martial Sister for not joining you!” She then tore through the skies as a streak of red light.

The scholar’s expression grew extremely unsightly and he regretfully glanced in the direction of his fellow Ghost Spirit Sect members before flying after the other two.

When the Ghost Spirit Sect Foundation Establishment cultivators saw this they scattered, fleeing for their own lives. They were fundamentally incapable of withstanding the fearsomeness of a Nascent Soul cultivator.

With a raised brow, Cultivator Liu furiously whispered, “Those people were truly useless. Not only did they not help us, but they also wasted time for us to flee.”

“No, it is far better now. There are more people to give us cover, greatly increasing our own chances of escape. May each of our fates be safe.” Han Yunzhi revealed an extraordinarily calm expression and patted the storage pouch at her waist, summoning a large snow-white bird in the air.

Cultivator Liu and the other Controlling Spirit Sect cultivators also moved quickly. They each fled using either their magic tools or their own spirit beasts. But regardless of whatever method they

used to escape, no one ran in the same direction as another. In their fear, they hoped to use their numbers to avert the gaze of death from behind them.

According to their thoughts, the Nascent Soul cultivator wouldn't be able to pick them all off one by one, fast though they may be. As such, the many cultivators fled as quickly as they could.

Having arrived fifty kilometers away, Han Li was amazed to discover that yet another wave of Devil Dao cultivators had appeared. But when he saw them scatter, he couldn't help but frown. He felt the matter had become far more troublesome.

A harsh expression appeared on his face and he took a deep breath. Silver lightning arced from his back followed by roars of thunder as two silver wings emerged from his back. After infusing a sliver of Divine Devilbane Lightning into the Thunderstorm Wings, Han Li instantly disappeared in an arc of lightning. A moment later, he reappeared several kilometers away.

Travelling great distances in a mere flicker of lightning, Han Li shortly appeared at the area where the cultivators had recently scattered.

Han Li expressionlessly used his spiritual sense to immediately find the Devil Dao cultivators that fled. At that moment, he discovered that the farthest to flee was already over twenty kilometers away. The closest was only five kilometers away.

Han Li sneered and immediately set his target on the farthest Core Formation cultivator and disappeared in a flash of light.

The cultivator farthest away wasn't the one who fled first, the black-robed man surnamed Xun. Rather, it was the middle-aged woman instead.

Her body pulsed with red light as she tore through the sky as a huge fireball, much like one would imagine of a demon spirit. This strange technique allowed her to travel the fastest amongst her

peers despite being only an early Core Formation cultivator.

There were several varied-length ribbons of light directly extending from her body. With each twinkle of azure light from a ribbon, the woman was propelled a hundred meters forward, resulting in an astonishing speed.

The woman was basking in the pride of her rarely seen wind-fire movement technique that she reckoned to be on par with others' top grade techniques. Combined with the wind attribute treasure she cultivated, the Floating Spirit Ribbon, her speed was increased even further. She believed her current speed to match even early Nascent Soul cultivators.

If one were to speak of the cultivator that was most likely to make it out safely, it would be her.

As the woman thought to herself, she suddenly heard rumbling nearby. Although the sound wasn't loud, she couldn't help but turn her head around in alarm.

Chapter 666: Sweeping Wind

When the woman turned her head around, she couldn't spot even the slightest trace of a person, but the deep rumbles only became louder as if something was on the verge of approaching her.

Her face instantly paled and she wildly look around in terror. In that moment, something suddenly came to mind and she flew off with even greater speed than before.

Just a second later, silver light flashed from the empty space, only to soon fade away. When the silver light flashed once more, it reappeared over three hundred meters away. Han Li's winged silhouette could be faintly made out from within the light.

Han Li glanced at the woman within the red light flying and felt a trace of surprise at her amazing speed. The woman's fearsome movement technique was actually comparable to his own Thunderstorm Wing's lightning movement. It seemed that there were truly an unfathomable number of techniques within the world.

Han Li felt a trace of sorrow from his heart before spreading out the wings behind him. With a single fan, Han Li turned into a bolt of lightning and appeared at the woman's front. He then calmly raised his hand and spread out his fingers, shooting a streak of azure swordlight from each of his fingertips.

With an expression pale from fright, the woman loudly yelled, "Senior, please spare me!" Soon after, the red light surrounding her body shined brilliantly, combining with her several azure light ribbons to form a dense light barrier around her.

Han LI slightly frowned and glanced at the woman in silence. The five streaks of swordlight then condensed into a thread and began to strike the light barrier.

Several muffled bangs sounded out. This fire-wind attribute barrier was truly powerful to be able to repeatedly block the attacks of the first three strands of sword Qi. But when the fourth strand of sword Qi struck, the barrier was shattered to the woman's despair. Two streaks of sword Qi then struck her vitals before she could react.

Han Li glanced at the woman's falling body and shook his head. With a flick of his finger, a fireball shot out, turning the woman's corpse into ash, and he summoned the woman's light ribbons and storage pouch into his hand.

"If I didn't kill you, those Devil Dao Nascent Soul cultivators would pursue me." Han Li sighed and his body flickered with lightning once more while his spiritual sense locked onto another fleeing figure.

The next target was the black-robed cultivator who held the deepest cultivation. He was at the peak of the mid Core Formation stage and was just a step away from entering late Core Formation stage.

As Han Li flew in that direction, he patted his spirit beast pouch and released large quantities of black-tainted Gold Devouring Beetles. Under the orders of his spiritual sense, the beetles immediately condensed into over ten tri-colored blades before chasing down each of the fleeing Foundation Establishment cultivators. This lot had meager cultivation and speed, so Han Li was disinclined to personally slay each of them and merely used his beetles to take care of them in one fell sweep. He would only personally deal with the Core Formation cultivators.

After all, these Core Formation cultivators were extremely fast. The beetles would have no chance of pursuing them. Gold Devouring Beetles were adept at closing short distance, but stood little chance in a long distance chase.

The black-clothed cultivator was standing underneath on a

shining dagger, while hurrying on his way with a sullen expression. He didn't expect to come across a Nascent Soul cultivator when he went looking for the murderer of his Sixth Junior Martial Brother. While he didn't know whether or not this cultivator had anything to do with the death of his Sixth Junior Martial Brother, he did know that the Controlling Spirit Sect cultivators had something to do with him. It appeared that this Nascent Soul cultivator was chasing after the Controlling Spirit Sect disciples. It was likely that they had provoked him in some way, drawing their Ghost Spirit Sect into the crossfire.

Even if the Nascent Soul cultivator didn't hold any ill intent toward them, it was likely that they would be killed in order to be silenced. Regardless, there was now a Nascent Soul cultivator involved in the investigation of his Sixth Junior Martial Brother's death, meaning it was no longer something he could deal with. After he returned, he would make a report to his master and have him deal with the matter.

Since this cultivator dared to pursue Devil Dao Core Formation cultivators such as themselves, this Nascent Soul eccentric shouldn't be affiliated with any faction. He must've been a vagrant cultivator, else he would've shown consideration to the vast powers of the Devil Dao.

As the black-clothed cultivator worriedly pondered, he suddenly heard a series of strange rumbles from his side. They were intermittent, and faded away as quickly as they appeared. Alarmed, the black-clothed cultivator hastily turned his head around, only to see a flash of azure light before all went dark.

Han Li expressionlessly waved his hand and retrieved the giant azure sword from the corpse.

Although this person had cautiously flew with a light barrier surrounding him, it was as powerless as thin paper against the strike of his combined Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords. Both man and light barrier were cut through in a single blow. Han Li's gaze

now turned to yet another distant location.

While being pulled forward by two dark green skulls, a scholarly cultivator wearing embroidered robes was nervously glancing at his surroundings. Despite having fled so far away, he clearly understood that so long as the Nascent Soul cultivator's spiritual sense enveloped him, it was only a matter of time before they would pursue him.

As a result, he simultaneously spread out his spiritual sense to its greatest extent while he flew forward as fast as he could. He could feel his thumping heart rise into his throat.

When a sudden sense of unease gripped him, he turned his head around and felt his heart drop into a deep abyss. Not far away, a youth in his twenties had appeared at an unknown time. He wore azure scholar robes and smiled towards him, revealing glints of his perfect teeth.

But before the embroidered-robed cultivator could turn his head back and run, the youth said with a friendly tone, "It must've been quite taxing for Fellow Daoist to have run so far. It's only proper for me to send you on your way!"

When Han Li said this, he flung his sleeve and scattered countless gold specks across the sky. These specks instantly formed a huge golden cloud and enveloped the sky with a fearsome presence.

The embroidered-robed cultivator released a wretched scream and was engulfed by the golden cloud alongside his magic treasure. A moment later, the golden cloud scattered, leaving no trace of the cultivator behind.

Han Li's expression changed upon seeing this and he muttered, "The evolved Gold Devouring Beetles are far more fearsome. In a mere instant, they were able to even clearly devour magic treasures. Their reputation of being able to devour anything is well deserved."

Soon after he flung a spirit beast pouch from his sleeve, and the Gold Devouring Beetles reluctantly flew into the bag after spiralling through the air several times. Han Li frowned at the sight and inwardly sighed.

With their vast increase in strength, the beetles could no longer be as smoothly controlled as before, resulting in a trace of helplessness dampening his previously high spirits.

Leaving another wave of thunder in his wake, Han Li disappeared yet again in a flash of silver light.

Han Yunzhi was mounted atop a pure-white spirit bird, that was hurriedly rushing through the sky as a fifteen meter long streak of white light. At that moment, both bird and rider were enveloped in a soft light. When combined with the woman's flawless appearance, she appeared all the more otherworldly.

However, her brow was currently furrowed and she held a palm-sized jade disk in her hand. She was carefully examining it with a fluctuating expression.

The polished jade disk pulsed with an astonishing emerald Qi and was deeply engraved with many decorative designs. It also glowed with lines of ancient, silver-gold talisman characters. One could tell that it was an unordinary treasure from a single glance.

The center of the jade disk was as sleek as a mirror, and there were six specks of red light that were intermittently flickering from within it as if they were fireflies. At that moment, a speck of light brightened and suddenly disappeared from sight.

When Han Yunzhi saw this, she pursed her lips in concern and attentively stared at the disk in her hand. However, after a short moment, two more lights brightly flashed and disappeared from sight.

Han Yunzhi's calm demeanor suddenly changed.

When yet another red speck of light disappeared, there were now

only two specks that still remained on the jade disk.

Han Yunzhi gently brushed away a strand of her hair from her face and bitterly smiled, muttering in an inaudible voice, “Apart from Junior Marital Sister Liu and I, there are no other survivors. The four Foundation Establishment disciples have already died. Could it be that this person is capable of doppelganger techniques or possesses some other inconceivable technique? It seems we’ve underestimated what a Nascent Soul cultivator is capable of. I reckon those Ghost Spirit Sect cultivators aren’t any better off. Had I known of this earlier, it would’ve been better for us to travel together and stake it all together.”

Chapter 667: Six-Winged Frost Centipede

Although Han Yunzhi felt slight regret at her previous decision, she knew there was nothing she could do about it now. She could only put away the jade disk with a sigh. She then spat out a translucent, glowing pearl. The pearl revolved once around her and then fell onto the large bird's head, rigidly staying in position without any movement.

The woman clutched her hands in an incantation gesture and pointed to the pearl with a solemn expression. As the pearl released a blinding radiance, the bird raised its head and cawed. With a shake of its wings, the giant white bird left a trail of white light in its wake, shooting forward with even greater speed.

Han Yunzhi didn't cease using the technique, and her complexion paled as a result. It was obvious this secret technique sapped much of her vitality, but given how dire the current circumstances were, she had no choice but to make use of it.

Not long after she made use of this secret technique she suddenly heard rumbles of thunder. Alarm appeared on her face, knowing that the Nascent Soul cultivator had finally caught up to her. She had already reached the greatest speed she could muster. There was nothing else she could do apart from hastily covering herself in a barrier; in order to easily enter Core Formation, she had previously cultivated a cultivation technique lacking any powerful abilities.

With two further claps of thunder, an arc of silver lightning flashed at the woman's side. A winged silhouette appeared about forty meters ahead of her, while an azure light obscured the man's face. The man wordlessly raised his arm, summoning several streaks of blinding azure light.

Han Yunzhi revealed an expression of despair and closed her eyes in the face of certain death.

“Yi! It’s you.” When the silhouette clearly saw Han Yunzhi’s appearance, he shouted out in surprise. The light from his arm dimmed in an instant.

Han Yunzhi was baffled by this. When she thought to examine the other party’s appearance, his figure flickered with silver light and disappeared. Han Yunzhi was at a loss for a moment, but when she heard thunder roar from behind her, she regained clarity of mind.

Just as the woman thought to hastily turn around, her light barrier was shattered, followed by the strike of a sliver of golden lightning.

Han Yunzhi suddenly felt herself turn numb and her limp body fell off the bird. At that same moment, she felt as if she were being carried in a man’s embrace. With shameful fury stirring inside her, she fell unconscious.

Han Li glanced at the woman in his bosom and wryly smiled with a trace of helplessness.

...

After an unknown amount of time passed, Han Yunzhi slowly opened her eyes to a blue, cloudless sky. She then glanced around in alarm and hurriedly stood up, discovering that she was currently at some small mountain.

Her large white bird was crouching nearby as if it had lost consciousness.

Han Yunzhi hastily walked over to take a look at it. Fortunately, the bird was merely affected by a simple restriction that was easy to dispel. The woman then awakened the bird with a breath of relief and flew it into the air, intending to observe her surroundings.

She didn’t seem to be far from where she had lost consciousness, and it appeared that not much time had passed either.

Han Yunzhi appeared to be at a loss for a long while, before suddenly recalling a dreadful matter. She hastily examined her clothes and body. They appeared ordinary as if nothing strange had occurred. Additionally, the magic treasures within her body and her storage pouch were untouched.

This truly dumbfounded Han Yunzhi. Not only was she not killed, but she wasn't assaulted either. She was completely lost as to what was going on.

Han Yunzhi recalled that before she fainted, the Nascent Soul cultivator yelled in shock, revealing an expression of bewilderment.

Could it be that Nascent Soul cultivator had recognized her? Were they friends? However, she couldn't recall ever having met any Nascent Soul cultivators from another sect.

Unfortunately, this person moved far too quickly and she wasn't able to see his appearance while his stature appeared rather ordinary. However, she wasn't able to make out anything from his cry of alarm.

Han Yunzhi pondered for a while, but she was unable to come up with any answers. She soon took out the jade disk from her robes and formed an incantation gesture with a single hand. After muttering a few words, a streak of white light struck the jade disk and a flicker of green light revealed that only single speck of red light remained.

Han Yunzhi tensely frowned at the sight. She began to feel trepidation when she recalled how she had been effortlessly restrained by the Nascent Soul cultivator.

Her Junior Martial Sister Liu was either killed or left the range of her magic treasure. From the Nascent Soul cultivator's previous killing spree, it seemed likely to be the former.

She faintly sighed and put away her magic treasure before flying

away on her bird....

At that same moment in a far away place, Han Li was flying through the air as he held a young woman in his arms. He looked down at the intact woman in his arms with an entirely calm expression. Not long after he knocked Han Yunzhi unconscious, he immediately changed direction and chased down the other Controlling Spirit Sect cultivator. When this woman saw Han Li chasing after her, she wore an expression of despair and threw several foot-long winged centipedes into the air.

This centipede was quite unordinary. Its body glowed with a pitch-black light and had two snow-white wings on its back. As soon as they left the spirit beast pouch, they spouted out large breaths of frost, resulting in a fierce appearance.

Han Li was initially stunned upon seeing them, but he soon grew elated. If he wasn't mistaken, these exotic insects were the eighteenth rank Winged Frost Centipedes. These centipedes were the same as his Gold Devouring Beetles; they were also an insect species that existed during times of antiquity.

Due to their partial lineage from frost-attribute dragons, their bodies became snow white upon full maturation, grew six wings, and could spew enough icy Qi to freeze anything within fifty kilometers. However, these centipedes were exactly the same as his original Gold Devouring Beetles; they were still only fledglings. The icy Qi they spouted might prove difficult to common cultivators, but to Han Li, who previously refined a trace of Celestial Ice Flames, it was nothing to fear.

Han Li immediately began to circulate his cultivation. He easily swept up the icy Qi with his sleeve and brought it towards his body without the slightest hesitation, much to Cultivator Liu's shock. He took advantage of this opportunity to restrain the woman through the use of lightning movement and knocked her unconscious.

With the absence of spiritual sense commands, the winged centipedes flew back into their spirit beast pouches.

Han Li glanced at the beautiful woman in his grasp and wore a trace of hesitation.

Killing the woman would only take a very slight effort. But in that case, he'd be incapable of acquiring the Six-Winged Frost Centipedes. Ordinarily, users of spirit beasts and insects placed down self-detonative restrictions to safeguard against having their animals falling into the hands of their killers. Once their master met an unexpected death and their soul scattered, the spirit beast would follow suit and self destruct. Naturally, if cultivators felt that their lifespan was drawing close to the end and wished to impart these animals onto their successors, they would get rid of these restrictions.

Han Li's Gold Devouring Beetles for example were also placed under similar restrictions.

Since Han Li wished to acquire these centipede eggs, he couldn't kill the woman. He was also interested in the Controlling Spirit Sect's method of controlling insects. After all, the Controlling Spirit Sect was renowned in the entire Heavenly South for its beast and insect use. They were certain to have great experience in controlling insects, and were certain to possess a secret technique capable of better controlling his Gold Devouring Beetles.

With that thought, Han Li placed several talismans on her body to restrict her spiritual power and prevent her from waking up. He then carried the woman off in a streak of azure light across the sky.

As for Han Yunzhi, when he recalled that young girl that he met in his youth, he couldn't bring himself to strike her down. In the end, he wasn't a heartless man by nature and could only leave the woman alone.

In any case, Han Yunzhi hadn't seen his true face and would have little to report once she returned. And by the time he headed back

to the State of Xi, even if these matters were all revealed, what could the Controlling Spirit Sect and the Ghost Spirit Sect do to him then?

The Heavenly Dao Alliance and the Devil Dao were already hostile with each other. With the Heavenly Fiend Sect Master personally attacking the Dreamcloud Mountain's sacred area, there were surely grievances being nursed by the three sects of Dreamcloud Mountains. So long as they were incapable of trapping the other, all the two powers would be able to do was menacingly glance at each other and speak boldly.

These circumstances were fully known to Han Li, but for the time being it would be best for him to hurry on his way to avoid being surrounded by other Nascent Soul cultivators.

With that thought, Han Li unconsciously increased his speed.

Chapter 668: Five Element Spirit Nascent

When the several Ghost Spirit Sect cultivators met their end, an isolated room in the old base of the Masked Moon Sect opened to reveal a black-robed cultivator leaving seclusion.

When his many capable disciples simultaneously met a bitter end, the Nascent Soul eccentric was unable to continue seclusion in feigned ignorance. He wordlessly released several message talismans, delivering the news of his disciple's tragic end to several Ghost Spirit Sect branches across the State of Yue. He was about to personally set off and discover who it was that was so bold as to have killed Splintered Soul's disciples.

However, his actions were too little too late. Before the Ghost Spirit Sect and Devil Dao cultivators even started their large scale search, Han Li had already left the State of Yue and began to head north in the direction of the State of Yuan Wu.

Daoist Splintered Soul ultimately gained nothing. He merely had a rough impression that his disciples had been killed by an unknown Nascent Soul cultivator that had already left the country. As a result, he could do nothing despite his raging fury.

Ten days later, Han Yunzhi returned to the Grand Spirit Mountains in the State of Tian Luo where she kowtowed in front of a pitch-black stone room. She had personally delivered a rough explanation of what had happened and had presented herself before the old man, begging for forgiveness.

“You were detected over a hundred kilometers away? And you were the only survivor amongst our sect and the Ghost Spirit Sect cultivators as well?” The old man's words were asked with an odd tone.

“That is right Martial Senior. I and Junior Martial Sister Liu each fled for our lives, but I was the only one who managed to escape. The other's whereabouts are unclear but it is likely that they were

also killed.” For some unknown reason, Han Yunzhi decided to conceal the fact that this unknown Nascent Soul cultivator had recognized her. She merely mentioned her escape vaguely.

“Since this person was able to confine the Spirit Nascent, this person is most likely a Nascent Soul cultivator. But to be able to sense your movements past fifty kilometers is a fearsome feat indeed. According to what I know, there are but a few late Nascent Soul cultivators in the entirety of the Heavenly South. Could it be this person is one of those undying bastards?” The old man’s voice grew sullen and contained a trace of deep dread.

“This is something that is unknown to Martial Niece. Because of this person’s immensely powerful spiritual sense, I didn’t dare to closely pursue him. I merely felt him leave the State of Yue from far away. He headed north through the State of Yuan Wu, towards the direction of the Righteous Dao and the Heavenly Dao Alliance. As such, Martial Niece didn’t dare to follow him. In the end I was unable to identify who it was and could only return to the sect. Please forgive me, Martial Senior.”

“You aren’t at fault, what is there to forgive? If this person was truly a late Nascent Soul cultivator, the result would be the same even if I personally went. It must’ve been hard to survive. Because I didn’t give it enough thought, I sent you and Liu Yu to track down the other party because of your secret sensing techniques. I didn’t think of the possibility that you’d encounter a late Nascent Soul cultivator. As of current, we are incapable of detecting the Spirit Nascent’s location, as wondrous as your secret technique may be. For the time being, just take some rest. Additionally, it seems Junior Martial Brother Han has left seclusion. Why don’t you pay him a visit?”

“Many thanks for Martial Senior’s understanding. Martial Niece will be taking her leave.” With a curtsy and an inward sigh of relief, she respectfully departed.

When Han Yunzhi was no longer in sight, silence filled the room.

A moment later, the old man turned to an empty corner of the room, “Do you believe your Junior Martial Sister to be telling the truth? If a late Nascent Soul stage cultivator truly appeared, there was no way that girl would’ve been able to escape by a fluke.” The old man’s voice became void of emotion as if he were someone entirely different.

A flash of light appeared from the corner as soon as the old man finished talking. A middle-aged man with thick eyebrows and large eyes respectfully answered, “Martial Senior, I used a secret technique to sense Junior Martial Sister Han’s mood. It was calm for the most part. It was merely when she mentioned her escape that her heart was in turmoil. I reckon she was concealing something that had to do with her escape.”

The old man released a long sigh and snorted. He gloomily said, “I thought the same. Were she not a descendant of Junior Martial Brother Han, I might’ve used a soul search technique on her to see what she is concealing. But out of consideration for her relationship with Junior Martial Brother Han, this vicious soul damaging technique cannot be used on her. After all, Junior Martial Brother Han is exceptionally fond of this particular descendant. He even exhausted much of his vitality to employ heaven-defying arts to cleanse her essence for the sake of allowing this girl to reach Core Formation.

“But since she didn’t conceal anything particularly crucial, I am disinclined to pursue the matter. However, it is quite troublesome for the Wood Spirit Nascent to fall into this old fellow’s hands. It is but a silver lining that it was the Wood Spirit Nascent that was captured, and not the other two Spirit Nascents. I recalled the Wood Spirit Nascent to only be a spare. Although it was slightly inferior, it was nurtured at the time for observation. I truly don’t know whether or not there will come a day where a Five Element Spirit Nascent will come into existence.”

The middle-aged man earnestly said, “The secret art of the Five

Element Spirit Nascents is a magnificent technique that was originally lost by the sect. Were it not for the Earth Spirit Nascent that Martial Senior unintentionally refined a few years ago, I fear that the sect would still be unable to gather together the Five Element Spirit Nascents. So long as the Spirit Nascents are properly prepared, they are able to merge into a single disciple's body through the use of a secret technique.

“Not long from now, our Controlling Spirit Sect will come to suddenly possess five Nascent Soul cultivators, allowing us to contend with the Harmonious Bond Sect for the chief position in the Devil Dao. However, it is a pity that while they will possess a Nascent Soul cultivator's abilities, they will lack the lifespan of one. As for the Wood Spirit Nascent, it turned out that the Spirit Nascent was truly refined too early. It was the most violent amongst them and was tremendously brutal and difficult to tame. It was reported to have devoured the Nascent Soul of one of our sect's Nascent Soul cultivators long ago. It would've been extremely difficult to fuse it with a body, so it's actually rather fortunate that it was the one that was lost.”

“Hehe! I am well aware. That Wood Spirit Nascent had somewhat managed to gain a consciousness over a thousand years ago. Moreover, it had snuck into the Hidden Scriptures Pavilion and snuck a glance at many secret techniques, allowing it to acquire vast and powerful abilities and escape its restrictions. If there hadn't been a late Nascent Soul cultivator elder that was standing guard at the time and had he not suppressed it in one fell swoop, a calamity would've been unleashed upon this world.

“However, I reckon that if this Spirit Nascent were to fuse with a disciple, they would possess the abilities of a mid Nascent Soul cultivator. Although it isn't very likely to occur, it still isn't something that can easily be given up. It's rather funny. Not only is it impossible to strengthen the Five Elements Spirit Nascent's Spiritual Power, but it is actually required to constantly weaken

the Spirit Nascent's cultivation to prevent backlash to the disciple's soul when they merge with it. For that very reason, we sent a party to bring the Wood Spirit Nascent to cleanse its body of gold and wind in Gold Scarce Valley in the State of Yuan Wu.”

When the middle-aged man heard this, he thought to say something as consolation, but he thought better of it and remained silent with a bitter smile on his face.

...

A month later, Han Li had finally arrived in the State of Xi and returned to his own cave residence. Han Li sighed and placed the woman surnamed Liu inside a meditation room before paying a visit to Mu Peiling.

Greatly satisfied to see that she was still in secluded cultivation, Han Li decided to pay a visit to the two elders of Drifting Cloud Mountain instead and let them know that he had returned.

The two Nascent Soul cultivators were happy to see Han Li and asked him what he was doing on his travels. Han Li skirted around the question and merely mentioned that he had killed a few Ghost Spirit Sect and Devilflame Sect Core Formation disciples on his travels. Rather than display any sign of worry, the two Nascent Soul cultivators praised him instead.

It appeared the two held deep grudges against the Righteous and Devil Dao. The silver-haired old man in particular had been forced to use a secret technique to preserve his life in a previous battle. This had caused great harm to his vitality that still hadn't recovered, so Han Li's actions had allowed them to vent their resentments vicariously.

Han Li felt even more at ease about the matter and had a chat with them for a long while before he returned to his cave residence. On his way back, he began to ponder over how he should deal with the white-clothed beauty.

When Cultivator Liu slowly awakened, she was absent-minded and her eyes were half opened. When she saw that there was a face so close to her own, she couldn't help but jump up and walk back until her back hit a wall.

At that moment, she discovered the owner of the face belonged to a beautiful young woman that was sweetly smiling at her. She glanced around to find herself in a sealed room. There was nothing in the room apart from a circular praying mat.

The woman happily said, "Fellow Daoist has awakened. If there is nothing wrong, I will be taking you to see Master."

Liu Yu's mind was still fuzzy and she still hadn't realized what was happening. She hesitantly asked, "Master? Who is he? Where is this place?"

Silvermoon examined the woman's startled figure and slowly said, "If you follow me, you'll have your answers. As for this place, it is the Dreamcloud Mountains in the State of Xi. You should know where that is!"

After a moment of thought, she immediately realized something and couldn't help but shout, "Dreamcloud Mountains in the State of Xi? You're a Heavenly Dao Alliance member!"

Chapter 669: Liu Yu

Silvermoon's eyes flickered and she said, "Fellow Daoist truly is intelligent. This place belongs to the Heavenly Dao Alliance's Drifting Cloud Sect. You'd best go quickly and not keep my master waiting!"

"Fine! This young woman also wishes to see this Senior. I will trouble Fellow Daoist to lead the way." The white-clothed woman was able to quickly regain her calm, showing herself to be an unordinary character.

Silvermoon faintly smiled and elegantly walked out of the room as the white-clothed cultivator silently followed after her. A short moment later, the two women arrived before a large hall.

Han Li was sitting in a stone chair, looking at a large, deep-yellow light barrier at the center of the room. It contained a spirit beast that was violently pounding against the barrier to no avail.

Liu Yu attentively examined the spirit beast and discovered that it appeared like a green bull with scales on its back and hoofs of silver. It was a rarely seen Iron Rhino.

Although this spirit beast isn't a remnant of an ancient race, it is an immensely rare spirit beast in the cultivation world. The recently exterminated Fu Clan in the State of Yuan Wu kept such a spirit beast. It was said to have strength to rival a mid Core Formation cultivator. Could it be the same beast?

If the bull was one and the same, then the person before her was the one who exterminated the Fu Clan.

Liu Yu grew inwardly fearful of Han Li's viciousness. There was nothing good that could come from being captured by this Nascent Soul cultivator!

She was also amazed by Han Li's youthful appearance. After all, male cultivators rarely cultivated appearance halting techniques.

To reach late Nascent Soul stage, one usually appeared middle-aged at the very least. Of course, these “middle-aged” cultivators were often far older than their appearances suggested. It was merely because of their high cultivation that their appearances aged slower. As a result, it wasn’t rare for old men to address a middle-aged cultivator as Martial Uncle or Martial Ancestor.

At that moment, Silvermoon stood in front of Han Li and solemnly said, “Master, I’ve brought the Fellow Daoist from the Controlling Spirit Sect.”

Han Li nodded and said, “You may leave.”

“Yes, Master!” Silvermoon replied to Han Li’s command with a smile and quietly withdrew. They both knew that Silvermoon wouldn’t be able to last much longer in her human form.

Liu Yu restlessly walked towards Han Li and gracefully saluted him before standing at the side. She revealed a dainty appearance in her deferential and obedient actions.

Han Li coldly glanced at the woman before turning his gaze to the Iron Rhino inside the light barrier. A sliver of lightning shot from his fingertip, penetrating the barrier and striking the spirit beast.

The Iron Rhino’s body sparked with electricity. With a wail, it fell onto its side and its legs began to incessantly twitch as it helplessly remained on the floor.

Liu Yu’s obedient expression slightly changed upon seeing such a powerful spirit beast being struck down with a single blow, but soon after, she regained her calm. Han Li was able to sense this and could clearly hear that her heartbeat was slightly faster than before.

At that moment, Han Li’s gaze returned to the white-clothed woman. He calmly asked, “What is your name, Fellow Daoist, and Why were you following me? It is quite understandable if the Devilflame Sect and the Ghost Spirit Sect were to track me down,

but I don't recall ever provoking your Controlling Spirit Sect."

Liu Yu was stunned upon hearing Han Li's question and her expression became slightly warped. She bit her lip and softly replied, "Senior captured our sect's Wood Spirit Nascent. This little woman had no choice but to follow orders to pursue your tracks. If I've offended you, I hope you won't bring yourself down to my level. I was only following orders."

Given the amazing abilities of a Nascent Soul cultivator, this woman clearly understood that if she didn't speak the truth, her knowledge could be forcefully obtained through a soul scouring technique. She had no intention of having her soul damaged and then turning into an idiot.

Han Li frowned and immediately recalled the monstrous little silhouette, "Wood Spirit Nascent! You're talking about that green Demon Nascent?"

Liu Yu explained with a bitter smile, "That's right. That is the Spirit Nascent. It was originally refined by our Controlling Spirit Sect with immense care and effort. It is extremely important to our sect, but we didn't expect that it would manage to flee and end up being capture by you."

Han Li's gaze flickered and he coldly said, "Refined? I originally believed this to be a demon spirit's incarnation. However, this small thing was truly troublesome. If I hadn't come along, your group definitely wouldn't have been able to deal with it."

Liu Yu revealed a trace of embarrassment and was at a loss of what to say.

Fortunately, Han Li was able to make our her true thoughts and pensively asked another question, "How were you able to track down the captured Spirit Nascent so quickly? Could it be something was done to it? If that's the case, I should've been able to detect it with my spiritual sense."

“Junior reports that there are no pursuing restrictions placed on the Spirit Nascent. Rather, my Senior Martial Sister and I cultivate a particular secret technique that is able to sense the approximate location of the Wood Spirit Nascent from afar. As such, my Martial Senior sent us to track it. Of course, we are only able to sense it from a certain distance. If it is too far away, say a hundred thousand kilometers, my Senior Martial Sister and I would be unable to perceive its location.” Not only did Liu Yu appear to be complete truthful in answering Han Li’s question, but she also took the initiative to mention some relevant information.

When Han Li heard this, he nodded his head. Regardless of whether she was telling the truth, this woman’s tactfulness was rather pleasing.

However, his following question came as a great shock to her.

“Since your Controlling Spirit Sect has spent such vast resources on this Spirit Nascent, it must be extremely useful. Why don’t you tell me about it?” When Han Li said this, he narrowed his eyes at he silently stared at her. A cold glint was present in his gaze.

Liu Yu betrayed a sliver of hesitation from her face. When her gaze met Han Li’s icy expression, she shivered and reluctantly replied, “The Wood Spirit Nascent is indeed as you say. When refining a particular technique, a cultivator with wood spiritual roots would be able to fuse with it and take the Spirit Nascent as one’s own Nascent Soul. Without having to condense one’s own Nascent Soul, they would possess both the abilities and cultivation of a Nascent Soul cultivator.”

She didn’t hesitate to divulge the secret matters of the Spirit Nascent despite knowing the trouble it would cause when she returned to the Controlling Spirit Sect. She understood that if she didn’t speak, she wouldn’t survive. This Nascent Soul cultivator definitely wasn’t the sort to pity the fairer sex and she could only be concerned for her safety at the time being.

Han Li was startled by her words but after calming down, he said, “So there was such a method to directly enter Nascent Soul stage. If this is true, then why hasn’t your Controlling Spirit Sect already unified the Devil Dao? Surely it wouldn’t be content with being below the Harmonious Bond Sect. Could there be a restriction to this secret technique?”

With a smooth and pleasant voice, Liu Yu said, “Senior is truly insightful. This Spirit Nascent is something that cannot be refined in large quantities. Although this secret technique was found long ago, it is incredibly difficult to refine a Spirit Nascent. Not only are its materials incredibly rare, but only the sect elders whose lifespans are drawing close may attempt to refine one. These deceased elder’s Nascent Souls seemed to be a necessary for their refinement. Also, the appearance of each Spirit Nascent will only occur by chance. In over ten attempts, there may not be even one success. The great fusion technique also requires five Spirit Nascents of different elements to use. It would fail otherwise.

“Our Controlling Spirit Sect has been accumulating these Spirit Nascents until now, but have only gathered together about seven. They had always been lacking the Gold Spirit Nascent, but it was finally acquired several tens of years ago. As such, the sect immediately chose ten Core Formation cultivators specifically as candidates to fuse with the Spirit Nascents and cultivate the related secret techniques. As things develop, five will be chosen to conduct the fusion ceremony.”

While Han Li’s expression was unphased, his heart greatly stirred. He held his chin in hand and began to mutter to himself.

A long moment later, he slowly said, “Since these cultivators were able to cheat their way into Nascent Soul stage, there are certain to be a few flaws.”

Han Li couldn’t help but draw similarities to Fiend Cores. Nurturing Spirit Nascents should also prove to be an incredibly difficult matter.

“Senior is right. Although I don’t know of the other flaws, I do know that cultivators that merge with a Spirit Nascent will still only retain their lifespan as a Core Formation cultivator. One also forfeits their true opportunity to condense a Nascent Soul by using this secret technique. Their cultivation will also remain stagnant and so will their lifespan. However, there are still many advantages to be had.” Since this point had been reached, the woman resolved herself to give the full details. After all, speaking more wouldn’t make matters worse.

Chapter 670: Frost and Blue Flame

With the woman's explanation, Han Li had a general understanding of the Wood Spirit Nascent that he captured. It was somewhat similar to his Weeping Soul Beast as a spiritual object that was refined by human hands. However, its viciousness was clear to see from its ability to devour a cultivator's primal soul. It was far different from his Weeping Soul Beast in the past.

Han Li's mind stirred and he broached another topic, "These Six-Winged Frost Centipedes of yours are rather uncommon. How did you acquire them? Given your current cultivation, it should be impossible for you to use insects of such an ancient lineage. Haven't your Martial Seniors or Uncles pried into this matter?"

Liu Yu was caught somewhat off guard and remained shocked for a moment. With puzzled thoughts, she bewilderedly replied, "So Senior also recognizes those insects? Junior found their eggs in an abandoned cave residence of an ancient cultivator. I originally believed the eggs to be dead and unhatchable. But after another examination, I found several that were alive. However, my sect seniors mentioned that although this insect was an ancient species and would have vast abilities when fully grown, they are extremely difficult to nurture. With all the right conditions, they would be able to fully grow in about a thousand year's time. As such, there were no cultivators that wished to take them. Junior believes their abilities to be impressive despite being merely in their infancy. As such, I decided to keep them."

'Did he ask about the insects because he was interested in them despite his current cultivation? Since a Nascent Soul cultivator is able to live only a thousand years, surely he wouldn't spend so much time and effort on these Six-winged Frost Centipedes?' Liu Yu remained perplexed despite much thought.

Han Li looked at her and calmly said something that made the woman's heart drop, "I am rather interested in your Six-Winged

Frost Centipedes, and I have a way to make them ascend by two grades in a short amount of time. Would Fellow daoist be interested in making an exchange with me?”

Liu Yu’s eyes brightly flickered and she flirtatiously said, “If Senior wishes for me to do something, please don’t hesitate to say it.”

Han Li ignored her actions and insipidly said, “I can help Fellow Daoist mature her Six-Winged Frost Centipedes, but all the eggs they lay belong to me. I have use for them. Also, I heard your Controlling Spirit Sect’s insect control techniques are rather original. Would you be able to teach them to me?”

“Insect control technique?” Liu Yu’s smile froze.

High grade secret techniques for controlling insects and beasts were of the utmost importance to the sect. It was considered an act of treason if one were to divulge them to outsiders. Although she had already intended to completely obey Han Li, her face vastly changed upon hearing him and she bitterly cursed in her heart.

Liu Yu looked at Han Li and anxiously said, “Senior should know that if I were to leak the sect’s techniques without permission, I would have my soul refined. If I were to give the secret technique to you, you should know what will happen to me.”

“So long as I acquire the insect eggs and the technique, you may leave free. I won’t stop you in the slightest. As for where you go next, the world is large. Can’t you just stand on your own?” Han Li spoke of the matter as if it were trivial.

Liu Yu’s expression wavered upon hearing him. A long while later, she wryly smiled and spoke with a distressed tone, “Senior speaks of it rather lightly, but I understand my own situation well. If I were to become a vagrant cultivator, I would have no chance of reaching Nascent Soul stage. Also, I already know of Senior’s identity and background. How could Senior allow me to easily leave? I fear I’d be dead when I leave.”

Han Li remained entirely indifferent before her words and said, “What do you mean? Are you accusing me of making a false vow, or are you trying to blackmail me?”

Liu Yu shook her head and said, “Blackmail? I wouldn’t dare. I am merely looking for a way to defend myself.”

“How do you plan on doing that?”

Liu Yu gracefully bowed her head, “If Senior doesn’t find it distasteful, this little woman would like to become your disciple. Does Senior find me acceptable?”

“You wish to become my disciple?” Han Li was truly shocked.

“Yes, with Senior’s cultivation, I am more than willing to become your disciple. As your disciple, I would be granted your protection and would have no qualms about divulging the techniques of the Controlling Spirit Sect. Else, if Senior doesn’t kill me, the Controlling Spirit Sect would surely pursue me for the rest of my life.” The white-clothed woman revealed a trace of dread.

Han Li frowned and began to tap the side of the chair as he pondered. He stroked his chin and indifferently said, “From what you’ve said, you haven’t yet taken a master in the Controlling Spirit Sect. But if you were to become my disciple, how would you confront your clan? Surely you understand that the Heavenly Dao Alliance and the Devil Dao are hostile to one another?”

Liu Yu calmly answered, “From Foundation Establishment to Core Formation, this Junior relied on chance every step of the way and never took a master. As for my clan, I am its last member. Cultivators appear in so few numbers after all, and all the others have passed away, leaving behind only me.”

Han Li mysteriously smiled and said, “If you’re only becoming my disciple for the sake of protection, it isn’t an impossible matter, but I must first mention that I will place a soul restriction on you. I also won’t be involved with your cultivation. In short, you will

only be my in-name disciple. You will enter the Drifting Cloud Sect and cultivate on your own. What do you think?”

Liu Yu replied without hesitation, “Placing down the soul restriction is only natural. After all, I was a Controlling Spirit Sect cultivator. So long as Senior shelters me from danger, I will have no complaints. As for cultivation guidance, I never dared to have hope for that considering that I only managed to preserve my life by a fluke.” She seemed to follow the same path of bitter cultivation that Han Li had experienced.

With the woman’s blunt agreement, a strange expression flickered from his eyes and he grew silent for a moment before nodding, “Good! Since you’ve agreed to these conditions, I will naturally uphold my end of the agreement. Tomorrow, I will bring you to the two other elders of Drifting Cloud Mountains and have you enter the sect under a different name!”

“Many thanks for your kindness, Senior.” Liu Yu felt greatly relieved with the knowledge that her life was secure, and hastily saluted Han Li.

Han Li waved his arm and said, “Return to the silent room and rest. I will be placing a soul restriction on you later and will remove the restrictions to your magic power as well.”

After expressing her thanks once more, she respectfully took her leave from the hall.

A flash of yellow light came from one of the hall’s walls, revealing Silvermoon in her human form.

Han Li glanced at Silvermoon and asked with a flat tone, “You still haven’t reverted back to your original form?”

“This servant has made great progress in cultivating her fox body. Of course, this led to an increase in the time I can take this form. However, Master, do you truly plan on taking this girl as a disciple? I recall that Master was never fond of the idea, fearing it

would cause problems through implication and interfere with your cultivation. Are the Six-Winged Frost Centipedes so important to Master? If you're talking solely about the secret insect control technique, you can simply draw it out through the Dreamtear Technique." The woman's eyes stirred while she spoke and she appeared puzzled.

Han Li leaned his body against the back of his chair and wore a lazy expression, "You're not wrong. I truly do hold the Six-Winged Frost Centipedes in high regard. At my current pace of refining the Celestial Ice Flames only a sliver at a time, I reckon it will take quite a while before I will be able to complete refine it."

Silvermoon hesitated for a moment and asked, "Do you know how long..."

"To tell the truth, it will take two hundred years at the very least to refine all the flames, given that there needs to be a buffer of a year between each sliver. This would take far too long, which is where the Six-Winged Frost Centipedes come in. Their icy Qi would be able to greatly shorten the amount of time it would take to refine the flames. Furthermore, it will have a certain fantastical effect when applied to the Celestial Ice Flames." Han Li then raised his hands and extended a finger from each.

Under Silvermoon's astonished gaze, each of his fingertips flickered with a white and a blue light. There was a frost that was white as snow along with an icy flame that glowed a brilliant blue. They then nimbly hovered off of his fingertips.

Silvermoon yelped in surprise, "This..."

Han Li calmly breathed out, spitting a small cloud of azure Qi onto the frost and the blue flames. The frost and blue flames then turned into specks of starlight and began to mix together.

Soon after, a muffled boom sounded out and a blinding white-blue light illuminated the room. A small violet flame bird appeared from within the azure Qi and began to flap its wings. It appeared

quite graceful as it flew in circles.

Han Li revealed satisfaction upon seeing the thumb-sized violet bird. There was even a trace of excitement that was betrayed from deep within his eyes.

“Silvermoon, do you remember the Sacred Asura Flames that the Old Devil Bone Sage used?”

Chapter 671: Insect Shell Technique

Silvermoon cried out in astonishment, “The Sacred Asura Flames! Of course I remember. Those are the devilflame known as the sacred flames of the Ghost Dao. If the Bone Sage had truly refined them, there would’ve been few in this world that could be his match. However, the flames you’ve used don’t seem very similar to what the Bone Sage displayed during that day.”

“Of course not. These aren’t the Sacred Asura Flames. But while I don’t know the specifics behind this particular flame, its might is clearly superior to the Celestial Ice Flames. If I haven’t guessed incorrectly, once the flames are fused with the six-winged frost centipedes’ icy Qi, their might will increase to the point where they could rival the Sacred Asura Flames. This was something I had unintentionally discovered after I absorbed the centipede’s icy Qi. A fortunate coincidence indeed.”

Once that was said, Han Li twirled his finger and had the bird disappear into his hand.

Silvermoon was initially stunned, but soon she revealed delight. With a salute and a gorgeous smile, she said, “This servant congratulates Master. The Celestial Ice Flames were something that common Nascent Soul cultivators didn’t dare to touch. With these newly fused devilflames, Master would be able to dominate the entirety of the Heavenly South.”

Han Li shook his head and sullenly said, “Dominate the Heavenly South? Those words are too bold. I do not know how many late Nascent Soul cultivators are in the Heavenly South, but each of these eccentrics should possess many years of vast experience and have their own killing moves. Perhaps one of them might have something to restrain my devilflames.”

Silvermoon pursed her lips and revealed a careless expression, “Master is being too modest. How could such an opportune matter

occur in this world?”

Han Li smiled and said, “It’s hard to be sure. The Gold Devouring Beetles may be incisive and are highly ranked, but the Bloodjade Spiders happen to be able to restrain them despite their vastly lower rank. If I were to run into a cultivator that knows about these beetles and possesses jade or wooden treasures, it would prove vastly disadvantageous for the beetles. There will also be something that can restrain these devilflames. In this entire world, there is no such thing as a treasure or technique that is unrivaled.”

“Master is still quite a careful and cautious person. From what you’re saying, you must want to prepare several killing moves to prevent yourself from being restrained by others.”

As if not yet finished speaking, Han Li unhurriedly continued, “I’ve previously never accepted disciples because my cultivation was lacking and I was a wanderer, with my residence ever changing. It would’ve been burdensome to take a disciple. But now that I am firmly established at the Drifting Cloud Sect, it is natural to nurture a few sources of influence of my own. Although one’s own strength is extremely important in the cultivation world, it is more dangerous and inconvenient to stand alone.

“At the very least, useful information will make its way to me. For example, there was no one who had taken the initiative to inform me of the trade meet that would take place in the State of Yu in two years. Although those two elders would notify me at the last second, I wouldn’t be able to make any preparations. As for Liu Yu, while her cultivation isn’t very high, she doesn’t seem to be someone that is only able to diligently cultivate. After entering the Drifting Cloud Sect, I reckon she would strive her hardest to develop her own influence without my orders.”

Silvermoon smiled and added on, “With the soul restriction placed on her, she will be unable to betray you until her cultivation surpasses Master’s. Her influence will therefore naturally be your own. This is far more advantageous than accepting an ordinary

disciple.”

Han Li glanced at Silvermoon and indifferently said, “It’s good that you know!”

He then turned his gaze towards the Iron Rhino. The spirit beast had managed to unsteadily raise itself, but its aggressiveness was vastly reduced. It now gazed at Han Li with a trace of fear.

“Although this spirit beast isn’t very useful for me, I am able to directly control it through the use of a magic tool since it belonged to a clan. I will be able to trade it for very good materials. After you train it, shut it in the spirit beast room. Once the trade meet in the State of Yu takes place, I’ll see whether or not I can exchange it for a few rare materials. I’ll be leaving now to place a soul restriction on Liu Yu.” Han Li took a black command talisman from his storage pouch and handed it over to Silvermoon.

Silvermoon took it into her hands and respectfully replied, “As you command, Master!”

Han Li then stood up and wordlessly left the room.

Silvermoon fiddled with the command talisman in her hand and muttered to herself with a pensive expression as if pondering about what Han Li just said. A moment later, she raised the command medallion towards the light barrier with a smile. A beam of yellow light then shot out.

Soon after, a series of miserable bellows filled the hall.

...

After Han Li placed the soul restriction onto Liu Yu, he brought her to the silver-haired old man. Of course, he didn’t give the complete truth. He merely mentioned that they had a bit of relationship and he had brought her back to the State of Xi from the Controlling Spirit Sect, intending to take her in as a disciple and look after her.

When the old man heard this, he was initially stunned before

laughing with an expression of realization.

“I was wondering why Junior Martial Brother Han made a trip to the Devil Dao’s domain. So it turned out to be for Martial Niece Liu. Good, very good! This sect could always use another Core Formation cultivator, and a woman at that!” The silver-haired old man accepted Liu Yu into the Drifting Cloud Sect without a problem.

Han Li was very satisfied by this and chatted with the old man a while more before departing with the woman. Liu Yu then officially changed her name to Liu Mei and officially became Han Li’s in name disciple.

Although Han Li said he wouldn’t personally guide the woman, he wasn’t about to be stingy when taking a disciple underneath him. He gave the woman two magic treasures and several bottles of demon core refined medicine pills.

If Liu Mei had been reluctant about taking Han Li as a master, she was now more than happy to pay her respects to him after such magnanimous gifts. For the first time, she felt that leaving the Controlling Spirit Sect to become Han Li’s disciple wasn’t such a bad thing.

Fortunately, this woman was rather quick-witted and soon handed over a jade slip containing all of the insect controlling techniques that she knew of. She also handed over her six-winged frost centipedes. Han Li accepted these items with a calm expression and concluded the disciple acceptance ceremony.

After departing Han Li’s cave residence, she established her own cave residence at the Drifting Cloud Sect’s White Phoenix Mountain and became a member of the Drifting Cloud Sect’s high grade cultivators.

Unclear as to whether or not the silver-haired old man was paying face to Han Li, Liu Mei was appointed as deputy mountain lord of White Phoenix Mountain, giving Mountain Lord Song an

assistant. When Han Li heard of the matter, he merely smiled.

After Han Li acquired the centipedes, he used the Rainbow Skirt Grass to mature them. Given that they had this effect towards the Gold Devouring Beetles, they should also affect the six-winged frost centipedes as well. Of course, he also entered a secluded room and began to study the insect control techniques alongside the Profound Nascent Formation Arts that Xin Ruyin had left behind.

Han Li sat motionlessly on the floor with his eyes shut as an azure light began to flow around his body as if he were cultivating a technique. A long while later, he opened his eyes and his eyes brightened. He promptly grabbed onto the storage pouch at his waist and wordlessly pointed, uttering, "Execute!"

Suddenly, several thousands of black-tainted Gold Devouring Beetles flocked from the pouch and hastily turned into a three meter large cloud that spiralled above Han Li.

Han Li stood up without any hesitation and began to move his feet in a pattern as he muttered to himself. He raised his hands and shot a mist of azure light, enveloping the beetle cloud. The Gold Devouring Beetles suddenly stopped buzzing and began to hover back and forth in tight formation. However, none of them made contact with one another, making for a bizarre sight.

Han Li's gaze brightly flickered as he watched the beetle cloud. He stared for a time before forming an incantation gesture with a single hand. He then extended his free hand as if reaching for the beetles and softly shouted.

Azure light flickered from the beetle cloud and they immediately fell onto Han Li, enveloping him within them. The beetles were several times quicker than before and began to frantically fly circles around him, forming an impenetrable barrier.

Han Li smiled at the sight, but that smile soon disappeared as he began to utter profound and cryptic incantations. Suddenly, the insect cloud suddenly charged towards Han Li with a sudden

eruption of blinding azure light.

A short moment later, the light disappeared to reveal Han Li's body covered in armor with simple designs of gold, silver, and black. The armor sparkled with azure light and continuously glinted. From a glance, one could tell it was incredibly hard and durable.

Han Li's smile became a grin and he stroked the armor. It felt unfathomably smooth as if it were without flaw.

Han Li's smile faded away and he sighed, muttering, "Not bad! I truly didn't think that my idea from Heavenvoid Hall of using beetles as armor would work. The Controlling Spirit Sect are truly worthy of their fame for their insect control techniques. They are far more powerful than I could've imagined."

Chapter 672: Second Nascent Soul

The insect control techniques weren't difficult to cultivate, and given Han Li's current cultivation and comprehension, they were easily learned. Even so, these secret techniques greatly broadened Han Li's horizons and the many recorded methods to direct insects to attack were fascinating and impressive. The Insect Armor Technique in particular had allowed him to act on his previous musings of the idea.

Previously, he was able to concentrate the black-tainted Gold Devouring Beetles into simple forms such as blades; however, objects as complicated as battle armor were still out of reach. It was a difficult matter that couldn't be resolved. With the Insect Armor Technique contained within the jade slip, he was able to skillfully learn how to condense battle armor in only a month.

Han Li was brimming with delight. He was convinced the expert that founded this technique was likely to have possessed insects as hardy as the Gold Devouring Beetles, whose defensive power wasn't inferior to true armor type treasures. Additionally, this technique wasn't well known considering there were so few insect cultivators.

In the hands of Han Li, and with the incredible durability of the black-tainted Gold Devouring Beetles along with their particular transformation abilities, this technique could create battle armor that was well suited for himself and possessed immense defensive ability that surpassed those of common armors. Moreover, once his pure Gold Devouring Beetles fully matured and he was more skilled with the insect control techniques, Han Li was confident they would be able to transform into even more impressive armor.

With the thought of the fully evolved Gold Devouring Beetles, he found it difficult to contain his excitement.

A short moment later, Han Li eventually regained his calm. He

stroked his armor in a moment of thought before blowing a mouthful of spiritual Qi onto the armor. The armor quickly scattered back into the cloud of beetles and returned to the spirit beast pouch under Han Li's orders.

He returned to sitting cross-legged on the ground and took out an azure jade slip from his storage pouch, the item that Xin Ruyin had left behind. He clasped it with both hands and narrowed his eyes before quickly immersing his spiritual sense into the jade slip. He skipped past the ancient formation spells for the time being and sought the Profound Nascent Formation Arts at the very end.

This technique was founded by an unnamed Devil Dao cultivator in the age of antiquity. Not only was the incantation profound and cryptic, but its words were dense with hidden and rich meaning. Han Li studied each of the words with great deliberation.

After half a year passed, Han Li had a greater understanding of the technique. This had led to him feeling great awe and respect towards the ancient cultivator that founded this technique.

This technique did indeed have some similarities to the Righteous Dao's Three Truths Severance Arts. As for precisely how much, Han Li had no way of knowing as it would be impossible for him to access the greatest secret technique of the Righteous Dao. Still, it stood to reason that this technique was entirely different from the External Incarnation Technique. This heaven-defying technique truly created a second incarnation of one's self. Once this technique was fully cultivated, one would possess an entirely independent Nascent Soul. Although there was something of a master-servant relationship between the two, each one would be able to survive if the other met an unexpected end.

It was merely that the secondary Nascent Soul suffer a great loss in vitality if the main Nascent Soul were to perish, before it could slowly take the place of the main Nascent Soul. If the secondary Nascent Soul were to perish, it would leave the main Nascent Soul completely unaffected.

What made Han Li even more excited was that the second Nascent Soul could be fused into the body of a superior cultivator's corpse and form an incarnation. Once the incarnation was complete, it was a genuine existence outside of the main body. Even if his main body perished, Han Li would survive so long as the incarnation did. After all, both bodies would hold the exact same memories and emotions.

This technique was entirely different from when he had Crooked Soul become a fiend core incarnation. Crooked Soul was merely a puppet that Han Li could control with a sliver of his primal soul. It had no emotions of its own nor independent ability. Furthermore, Crooked Soul had to be in range of Han Li's spiritual sense, else he would lose control.

As for the incarnation created from the Profound Nascent Formation Arts, it could exist entirely on its own regardless of distance. It would take independent action without orders as if it were just another cultivator.

Han Li felt his blood run cold when he read this. But after some further reading, he eventually reached the description of the technique's restrictions and flaws.

Once Han Li read through them, it felt like he had been drenched in cold water. His fervent excitement had disappeared in an instant. The difficulty of condensing a Nascent Soul had left him completely speechless.

It took common cultivators centuries to fragment their core and form a Nascent Soul. Cultivating a Second Nascent Soul would require a second core to shatter, which would take far too much time. The only method would be to seize another cultivator's Nascent Soul and erase its consciousness. Once it is assimilated with one's own spiritual sense, it would become one's Nascent Soul. Although the jade slip mentioned the method to seize and wipe the consciousness of another Nascent Soul, needless to say it was an extremely dangerous matter with low odds of success.

Even if this managed to somehow succeed in a fluke, the assimilation process was even more dangerous. Given that a Nascent Soul was temporarily seized, forcefully assimilating it with oneself still risked having one's spiritual sense being devoured by the target Nascent Soul in the process. Of course, if this managed to succeed, one would have a second Nascent Soul along with its many benefits.

If one wished to take it a step further and create an incarnation, one merely needed to find a suitable corpse and have the second Nascent Soul possess it. Of course, the greater the cultivation of the original body, the better. It would be optimal if it were the body of a Nascent Soul cultivator so that the secondary Nascent Soul would be able to fully utilize its powers.

Nevertheless, Nascent Soul cultivators couldn't speak lightly of killing a cultivator of a similar grade. It was an incredibly difficult matter, and even with Han Li's great might he doubted his own ability to do so.

Of course, even if the Profound Nascent Formation succeeded, one still wasn't free of worry. There was still a chance of backlash.

An incarnation would be equivalent to refining another self. With the passage of time, there would be discrepancies between their emotions and memories that would appear. The incarnation may even strive its hardest to seize control over the main body. Especially when the incarnation possessed superior power to the main body, there was a chance it would take advantage of its special connection to the main body to restrain it, reversing their positions.

As such, although an incarnation can be separated by vast distances and carry out the orders of the main body, it is best to not have it stray too far away. Every so often, one must perform the Profound Nascent Formation Arts' Unification Technique to dispel the inner demons of each soul and converge their primal souls into one, strengthening the primary soul's control over the

incarnation.

Of course, in addition to the incarnation backlash, the incarnation also possessed its own flaws, but they weren't nearly as significant.

In fact when the second Nascent Soul was acquired, it was already considered initial success stage for the Profound Nascent Formation Arts. Without any need to cultivate a second incarnation, one had a vast advantage in battle. The second Nascent Soul would be able to use various powerful abilities and greatly increase the chance of survival without any danger from backlash.

Han Li's expression was sullen as he examined the advantages and drawbacks of this cultivation art.

Although it was incredibly difficult to cultivate, it possessed a proportionately powerful ability that he wasn't about to easily relinquish. So long as he fully cultivated it, it would be equivalent to having an additional life, an extremely captivating proposition. As for how he would acquire another cultivator's Nascent Soul, Han Li suddenly recalled the Wood Spirit Nascent that he had captured earlier.

Han Li frowned and took out the jade box from his storage pouch. He gently stroked the jade box and remained silent for a long while.

He heard a bit of the Wood Spirit Nascent's origins from Liu Mei and naturally knew that it was quite different from ordinary Nascent Souls. However, it also stood to reason that the Controlling Spirit Sect's Five Element Spirit Nascents technique had a few similarities with the Profound Nascent Formation Technique. Since this Spirit Nascent was to be fused with a Core Formation cultivator, refining the Wood Spirit Nascent as a second Nascent Soul should follow the same principles and prove to be possible. Besides, he had no other uses for the Wood Spirit Nascent

so there would be no harm in trying.

As for the danger of seizing it and erasing the consciousness of the Nascent Soul, it shouldn't prove to be a problem with assistance from his other treasures and his powerful spiritual sense. The only problem he had to worry about was the assimilation of the formless Nascent Soul.

If any problems occurred, he could only sever the portion of his spiritual sense that occupied the Nascent Soul, causing great harm to his soul in the process. It was difficult to say if such an outcome would result in any lasting influence to his mind.

With that thought, Han Li began to wear a face of hesitation.

Chapter 673: Trade Meet

After glancing at the jade box in his hand for most of the day, Han Li sighed and slowly placed it back into his storage pouch. Azure light then flashed from his hands and the azure jade slip reappeared.

Should he take the risk to refine a second Nascent Soul? He would put the decision off until he fully comprehended the incantations for the profound Nascent Formation Arts. This matter was dangerous and extremely difficult, as such it would be better if he were cautious. With his mind made up, he sank his spiritual sense into the jade slip and entered a state of obliviousness.

Not far away from Han Li, Silvermoon was peacefully cultivating in her own secluded room. All of the other miscellaneous tasks were being handled by Han Li's ape puppets.

Time quickly went by, and yet another year had passed.

One day, two streaks of light, one azure and one white, flew in the direction of Han Li's cave residence. Two silhouettes could be faintly made out from within them. They were the two Drifting Cloud Sect elders, a silver-haired old man and a sallow-faced middle-aged man.

They couldn't help but exchange a smile when they saw that the restrictions around Han Li's residence were in full effect.

The middle-aged man surnamed Lu flicked his finger and sent a previously prepared letter talisman into the restrictions in a streak of fiery light. Once the talisman disappeared from sight, he smiled to the silver-haired old man and said, "It seems ever since Junior Martial Brother Han returned, he remained within his cave residence in diligent cultivation.

The silver-haired old man surnamed Cheng spoke with a strange

expression, “That is to be expected. How else could Junior Martial Brother Han have formed a Nascent Soul in two hundred years? It is a pity that the end of my lifespan is drawing close. I am incapable of treading further on the path of Immortal cultivation, and I reckon you know this too.”

The middle-aged man hastily consoled him, “Senior Martial Brother Cheng must be joking. He still has another two hundred years ahead of him at the very least.”

The silver-haired old man shook his head and calmly said, “Hehe, Junior Martial Brother Lu, how could I not know of my own circumstances? Perhaps if I hadn’t been wounded from the last battle, I might’ve been able to live another two hundred years without a problem. But despite my full recovery, the battle caused great harm to my vitality. It is something that cannot be solved through meditation.”

“Senior Martial Brother!” The middle-aged man’s expression changed and he thought to say something, but the old man interrupted him with a wave of his hand.

The old man slowly said, “Even if I enter no further battles, I will live only sixty years more at most, that much is certain. There is no need to comfort me. Why else would I have so painstakingly roped Junior Martial Brother Han into our Drifting Cloud Sect? I have even done my best to befriend him. Normally, even if we were truly impatient about taking him into our sect, we would’ve done a meticulous investigation into his background. Fortunately, our hasty judgement has turned out to be correct. Although this person’s history is somewhat complicated, he holds no ulterior motives towards our Drifting Cloud Sect.”

The middle-aged man was stunned, “Senior Martial Brother sent disciples to investigate Junior Martial Brother Han’s background?”

“That’s right. Although Junior Martial Brother Han’s background is rather vague, with his name and appearance, I’ve

sent disciples to stealthily make some inquiries into the State of Yue, and ended up with a rough background of our Junior Martial Brother Han. You might not believe it, but over a hundred years ago, our Junior Martial Brother was originally a Foundation Establishment cultivator of Yellow Maple Valley. During that time, he had earned a small reputation for himself. It was said that during the war with the Devil Dao, he alone managed to kill many cultivators of the same grade.

“But when Yellow Maple Valley was later routed, that Treacherous Ghost Linghu abandoned him for some reason. Afterwards, there was no further trace of Junior Martial Brother Han. Perhaps he was cultivating in concealment and had only recently emerged when he reached late Core formation stage. He then arrived at our Drifting Cloud Sect and formed a Nascent Soul. It seems that during this missing period, Han Li should’ve had some fortuitous encounters.”

The middle-aged man sneered, “It is quite ridiculous for him to be abandoned at the time. Throwing away a sect disciple that happened to be such a rare cultivation genius! In a short amount of time, he managed to cultivate from Foundation Establishment stage to Nascent Soul stage! I reckon that old ghost Ling Hu would be driven mad if he knew about this matter! After all, Yellow Maple Valley hasn’t been faring very well in the Nine Nations Union. It should be quite difficult for his sect to rely on him alone. If I recall correctly, he should’ve entered Nascent Soul stage the same time Senior Martial Brother Cheng did. The end of his lifespan should also be drawing near.”

“That’s right. Old Ghost Ling Hu is just a bit older than me, but he is quite a bit more proficient at extending his lifespan. Additionally, Yellow Maple Valley should also have no problem after his death. They can just rely on the repute of their allied Nascent Soul cultivators. I’ve also had similar worries for the Drifting Cloud Sect when I passed, and feared that Junior Martial

Brother would find it difficult to stand alone!

“Were it not for the sacred spirit veins of the Dreamcloud Mountains, Junior Martial Brother would’ve found it difficult to preserve the sect by himself. But even so, many would look at our sect with greed once it appears any weaker. My original thoughts were to urge Junior Martial Brother to take the initiative to withdraw from the Dreamcloud Mountains once I passed, avoiding any potential calamity the sect may encounter. But now that Junior Martial Brother Han has joined us, the situation has changed.

“Although Junior Martial Brother seems to be a cultivator who is wholeheartedly dedicated to pursuing the Immortal Dao and is disinterested in sect affairs, I am actually relieved by this. So long as we carefully win him over, our sect will continue to exist without worry for another thousand years!” The silver-haired old man twirled his beard in his hand as if he had a plan up his sleeve.

The middle-aged man hesitated for a moment before worriedly saying, “But while Junior Martial Brother Han may be a cultivation genius, his age is too young and he just recently condensed his Nascent Soul. I don’t know whether or not his skills are up to par.”

With a pensive expression, the silver-haired old man said, “Yes, I also share the same worries. After all, there are a few cultivators wholeheartedly dedicated to pursuing the Dao that are unwilling to spend much time cultivating powerful abilities. While this results in a deep cultivation, these cultivators may be unable to defeat cultivators that are a grade lower than them. Although I don’t believe Junior Martial Brother Han to be such a cultivator, it would be better to test this. As such, I will be staying behind to guard the sect. You will accompany him to the trade meet.”

“Does Senior Martial Brother mean to say...” The middle-aged man revealed a sudden trace of understanding.

The old man smiled and thought to say something further when the mist in front of him suddenly parted. The old man immediately grew quiet as the middle-aged man followed suit.

The two walked into the path that opened through the fog without any reservations and disappeared from sight.

...

The largest trade meet in the Heavenly South convened at the northmost country of the Nine Nations Union, the State of Yu. Deep within the mountains of this country laid Soaring Heavens City, the capital of the Nine Nations Union. Cultivators from all over the continent flocked to this country.

Be it man or woman, young or old, all of those that resided within the city were cultivators. This city alone even had seven cultivators at mid Nascent Soul stage or higher stationed there, resulting in the immediate deaths of any cultivator who dared to cause trouble in the city. As a result, regardless of a cultivator's affiliation, none dared to act imprudently within.

Two months before the start of largest trade meet in the Heavenly South, the Nine Nations Alliance activated a spell formation with a resounding reputation, the Greater Light Extinguishing Formation, to protect the city in place of a majority of its normal restrictions.

Because a few cultivators have already made their way to the city out of impatience or otherwise, there were already stalls placed inside. Trade was already being conducted between cultivators.

While the official days of the trade meet would have treasures of all kind in great number, they weren't something that common cultivators could afford. They would rather find a few suitable uncommon materials ahead of time instead.

The quiet, cold Soaring Heavens City soon became bustling with activity as if it were filled with the liveliness of the marketplaces in

common mortal cities. However, those walking the streets of the city were cultivators of high rank and the currency being used were spirit stones.

The city only possessed a single auction house which was under the control of the Nine Nations Union. It had also begun to appraise and auction off all sorts of rare treasures, contributing to the liveliness of the city.

Just as the trade meet was only half a month away, there were three streaks of light steadily flying through the sky several thousands of kilometers away.

Once the three lights grew closer, they were revealed to be two men and one woman. The woman was a cool and elegant beauty. She flew at the side of a youth with a common appearance that wore a rather intimate expression.

The third person in their party was a blue-robed middle-aged man whose clothes fluttered through the wind in a display of unordinary majesty.

Chapter 674: Marquis Nanlong

The two men were Han Li and Elder Lu who had traveled from the State of Xi. As for the beautiful female cultivator, she was Han Li's concubine, Mu Peiling.

The silver-haired old man had stayed behind to keep watch over the Drifting Cloud Sect, preventing any sneaks from stirring up trouble while they were away. According to what the old man said, he had already participated in this grand meeting about eight times and had no materials that he currently required. Naturally, he wanted to give the opportunity to his younger Junior Martial Brothers instead.

As for Mu Peiling, she had reached a cultivation bottleneck and encountered Han Li when she left seclusion. When she heard that he was heading to the largest trade meet in the Heavenly South, her heart stirred and she asked to come alongside him to broaden her horizons. After all, if she were incapable of reaching Core Formation, this may be the only chance she had to participate in this trade meet.

Since he wasn't unkind by nature and didn't feel this trade meet to be particularly dangerous, he agreed. After all, having a beautiful companion along on a long trip was a delightful matter.

Naturally, the three sects of the Dreamcloud Mountains had their own parties of cultivators that set off towards the trade meet, but Han Li was unwilling to travel together with those juniors and had left for the State of Yu ahead of them.

By travelling along the route that best avoided the countries of the Righteous and Devil Dao, the three were able to arrive within the borders of the Nine Nations Union without problem.

At that moment, Han Li was absentmindedly examining his nearby surroundings. There were cultivators that occasionally passed by, but when their spiritual sense swept past the middle-

aged man surnamed Lu and then Han Li, their expressions displayed shock and they immediately veered off, fearing that they would somehow provoke them.

Han Li and Elder Lu were travelling with their cultivation unconcealed. Any cultivator who saw two Nascent Soul cultivators travelling together would be filled with fear and immediately take another route.

At the beginning, Mu Peiling was unaccustomed to this, but it soon became a common sight.

As the party continued to fly through the skies, Elder Lu turned to Han Li and amiably said, “The trade meet is only held only once every hundred years. Previously these trade meets were alternated among the Righteous and Devilish Dao between the States of Tian Luo and Feng Dou. At the time, the Heavenly Dao Alliance still hadn’t existed and the Nine Nations Union was fully suppressed by the Moulan Spell Warriors. As such, this astonishingly profitable gathering was monopolized by the two sides. But after the Righteous and Devilish Dao expanded, neither party felt at ease at having the other party host the trade meeting. As such, the last trade meet was held in the Nine Nations Union without any contest, a loss to both sides that was a great cause for grief.

With slight enthusiasm, Han Li said, “Senior Martial Brother Lu, this is quite convenient for the Nine Nations Union, but I’ve heard quite a few interesting things about Soaring Heavens City. I heard that it is the only city in the entirety of the Heavenly South that is made up of only cultivators. I heard that in the past, when the armies of Moulan Spell Warriors made their way into the State of Yu, Soaring Heavens City was where the cultivators of the newly formed Nine Nations Union defeated their armies with the assistance of the Greater Light Extinguishing Formation. The battle was said to be truly desperate, resulting in many Nascent Soul cultivators perishing.”

“Hehe! Relax Junior Martial Brother Han. This Soaring Heavens

City definitely won't disappoint you." The Elder Lu chuckled and then probingly asked, "However, I've got the feeling that there is something a bit different about you after you spent some time in seclusion, and it isn't an increase in your cultivation. It seems Junior Martial Brother has cultivated some sort of secret technique. I can't see any other reason for this strange reason."

"I had truly cultivated a few techniques, but I've got quite a ways to go before I reach greater mastery of them. But I've heard from other disciples that Senior Martial Brother Lu's Thousand Wave Arts is a famed top grade cultivation art. This junior brother wishes he will soon be able to see it." with a slight smile, Han Li easily turned the subject back to the middle-aged man.

Elder Lu shook his head and wryly smiled, "Junior Martial Brother shouldn't listen to the drivel that those disciples spout. My Thousand Waves art is simply an ordinary water attribute cultivation technique. While it is rather easy to defeat Core Formation cultivators with it, I haven't encountered much success with it when used against cultivators of a similar grade. Fortunately, this cultivation art possesses two divine abilities that specialize in survival. Even when I'm defeated, I am able to preserve my life."

Han Li took his words to be mostly true. He recalled that in their last battle with the Righteous and Devil Dao, Elder Lu was able to return to the Dreamcloud Mountains unharmed. Instead, the silver-haired old man with slightly greater cultivation had suffered heavy injuries before being able to escape. It seems his survival ability was indeed impressive.

Han Li's heart stirred and he thought to say something else when his expression suddenly changed and he turned his head to the side.

Close at Han Li's side, Mu Peiling curiously asked, "Sir, what's happening over there?" Since she became Han Li's concubine, her icy appearance had been replaced with bright eyes and a

captivating charm.

Han Li frowned for a moment before calmly saying, “There seems to be a squad of cultivators with a Nascent Soul cultivator heading over, that seems to have discovered us.”

When the middle-aged man followed Han Li’s gaze, he wore an expression of astonishment and unconsciously thought better of Han Li. “Yi! That seems to be the case. I didn’t expect Junior Martial Brother’s spiritual sense to be so strong. You’ve detected it a moment earlier than me! I didn’t expect for Junior Martial Brother to be so careful as to release his spiritual sense while so near Soaring Heavens City!”

Han Li silently smiled in response.

In truth, given his powerful spiritual sense, it hadn’t taken him any effort to sense them. However, the Nascent Soul cultivator approaching them from afar did seem to possess powerful spiritual sense as well.

Han Li and Elder Lu were curious about who was approaching them and unconsciously slowed down.

A short moment later, a drum beat could be heard from the distance and golden light shined from the horizon. A group of golden clothed and armored cultivators with the appearance of heavenly warriors were closely escorting a carriage of dazzling and magnificent design. There were also white cranes flying in front of it followed by palace maids carrying cauldrons. It appeared as if a monarch was making a tour in an imposing manner.

Mu Peiling was dumbfounded at the sight and her jaw dropped in astonishment.

Han Li was also amazed by the sight, but he soon regained his calm. He was aware that cultivators were odd and fantastical to every description, particularly cultivators at the Nascent Soul stage. Perhaps due to the influence of their cultivations arts or

otherwise, their temperaments become strange and separated from reason. Since this was a common affair, he was surprised for only a moment.

But when the middle-aged man saw this, he felt his blood turn cold and he harshly whispered, “Duke Nanlong! Why is this old eccentric also participating in the trade meet? Junior Martial Brother Han, do not speak carelessly. His abilities are mighty and his temperament is strange. Since I’ve met him in the past, let me deal with him.”

With those hasty words, the middle-aged man called for Han Li to stop alongside him. He wore a serious expression as he respectfully waited for the group of cultivators to approach.

Han Li’s expression stirred from seeing the middle-aged man appear so nervous. He complied with his warnings and Mu Peiling tactfully kept silent as well.

A short moment later, the golden-armored cultivator soldiers and the carriage drew closer. Upon closer look, Han Li felt his heart tremble.

The halberd wielding soldier cultivators weren’t much to behold. While their appearances were formidable and lofty, their cultivations were only at Foundation Establishment stage. Rather, what made Han Li’s heart tremble were the two spirit beasts pulling the carriage.

From the azure scale armor and the bizarre horn on its head, one of the beasts appeared to be a mythical Qilin. The other beast had fluttering wings of fire with long, golden feathers. It was actually a fire phoenix.

As Han Li grew fearful of the two spirit beasts, the carriage drew closer to them.

Before the carriage approached, Elder Lu saluted in its direction and spoke with a clear voice, “Is that Marquis Nanlong? I am the

Drifting Cloud Sect's Lu Luo. It has been three hundred years since I've last seen you in the company of my master, Monk Mu Li. It is truly my fortune to meet you again!"

Although Elder Lu's words were neutral in tone, Han Li could clearly hear a trace of fear in his voice and noted that he seemed to refer to himself as a Junior.

The huge carriage was obscured from sight by a barrier of golden mist. However, when Elder Lu called out to the carriage in greeting, the drumbeats came to a sudden stop.

The group of cultivators stopped about a hundred meters away from Han Li and company as silence descended.

Han Li's eyes narrowed upon seeing this, but his expression soon returned to normal.

A lazy tone came from within the golden light, "Oh! So you're Mu Li's pedantic, scholarly disciple! At the time, you seemed to only be a Core Formation cultivator. I didn't think in a mere three hundred years, you've also reached Nascent Soul stage. I've heard your master had passed away in meditation during that time. It is truly a pity. However, the Fellow Daoist at your side seems quite unfamiliar."

Chapter 675: Forceful Exchange

When Han Li heard himself mentioned, he simply smiled and remained silent. He was certain that his Senior Martial Brother Lu would answer on his behalf.

Sure enough, the middle-aged man rushed to introduce Han Li before Marquis Nanlong could speak any further.

“Marquis, this is my Junior Martial Brother Han. He has just recently condensed a Nascent Soul and joined our sect. At his side is Lady Mu, his concubine. Junior Martial Brother Han, this is Marquis Nanlong, an old friend of my deceased master. I hope you will acquaint yourself with him.”

As his clothes fluttered in the wind, Han Li calmly saluted the carriage, “It is a pleasure to meet you, Marquis Nanlong!”

Within the carriage, Marquis Nanlong indifferently said, “Han Li? That name is completely unfamiliar. It seems Fellow Daoist Han is truly a new Nascent Soul cultivator. Might we have an exchange of skill to gauge your abilities?”

“Ah? Junior Martial Brother Han only condensed a Nascent Soul a few years ago. How could he possibly be a match for Fellow Daoist Nanlong? I mean, Fellow Daoist Nanlong is already a mid Nascent Soul cultivator.” Lu Luo’s smiling expression froze and he inwardly cursed. Although this old eccentric’s temperament was peculiar, his words suggested he was now entirely different from before!

“Be at ease. I won’t be using my cultivation to take advantage of the weak. We will only be using our spiritual sense to contest. After all, Fellow Daoist Han’s spiritual sense is rather strong, very unlike a cultivator who had just condensed his Nascent Soul. I am anxious to display my own skill.”

As soon as that was said a golden light flashed from the huge

carriage, fading away to reveal the three that were sitting inside.

One was a man wearing robes embroidered with purple pythons and a tall, jade-green hat with a long beard that reached down to his chest. The other two were women dressed in snow-white palace robes. Each beauty was being loosely held in his embrace on each side.

The women at the Marquis' sides were certain to be his concubines. Although their cultivations were only at Foundation Establishment, their graceful beauty was a sight to behold.

Worry filled Lu Luo and he directly said, "Marquis must be joking. Although Junior Martial Brother Han's spiritual sense is a bit strong, contests of spiritual sense are exceedingly dangerous. How can this be taken so lightly?"

Marquis Nanlong chuckled with a cold smile and calmly said, "Fellow Daoist Lu, you seem worried but perhaps Fellow Daoist Han would be willing to give it a chance." He glanced at Han Li as a cold glint flickering through his eyes.

"Moreover, if I remember correctly, we are already within five hundred kilometers of Soaring Heavens City. If Fellow Daoist Han truly refuses my good intentions, I will make use of the forced trade law."

Lu Luo's expression changed as he faintly felt a sense of foreboding, "Forced trade? What does the Marquis mean?"

Marquis Nanlong's gaze coldly swept over Mu Peiling as he expressionlessly said, "From how intimately Lady Mu and Fellow Daoist Han are acting, Fellow Daoist Han must certainly hold her dear. It just so happens that I have two beloved concubines at my side, but I've grown bored of them. I'll use them to exchange for Fellow Daoist Han's concubine. My two beloved concubines are on par with Lady Mu with regards to both cultivation and appearance, fulfilling the forced trade conditions. If Fellow Daoist Han is unwilling to trade, you will have to stake it in a contest of spiritual

sense. If you win, not only will you retain your own concubine, but you may take both of mine.”

The two concubines in his embrace had a slight change of expression, but they soon returned to normal.

When Lu Luo heard this, furious alarm was revealed on his face and he was at a loss for words while Mu Peiling turned pale.

Han Li frowned for a moment before he calmly responded, “A forced trade! Senior Martial Brother Lu, could you give me a detailed explanation?” From Han Li’s perspective, this Marquis Nanlong was still a mere mid Nascent Soul cultivator and was nothing to fear with Han Li’s current abilities.

“It isn’t anything much. Forced trades are one of the laws that are specifically for use by Nascent Soul cultivators of the host power.

“Junior Martial Brother should know that when cultivators reach Nascent Soul stage, no powers are willing to offend one another. The host of the trade meet is no exception to this.

However with such a large trade meet, there are certain to be a few clashes and disagreements. If the cultivators are at the Core Formation stage or below, the hosting power may forcefully suppress them. But if something were to occur between Nascent Soul cultivators, the hosting power is unwilling to go through the trouble of intervening. As such, there are a set of particular laws that will allow for Nascent Soul cultivators to resolve the dispute themselves. Forced trades are among the least used of these laws.

“Specifically, before the trade meet starts any Nascent Soul cultivators within five hundred kilometers of the city may use obviously superior goods to trade for something they require. If the other party refuses, both sides may settle the decision by comparing techniques and divine abilities. However, the conditions for use are harsh. Even if the initiator of the exchange wins, they still must pay the price to exchange, but if they lose,

they will hand over their proposed goods to the challenged party free of charge.

“Furthermore, if someone is severely injured during the challenge, the trade meet host will pursue the offending party to its greatest extent, but it had always been extremely difficult to constrain Nascent Soul cultivators. Also, unless the item is desperately required and one’s cultivation is clearly higher than the challenged party, no one would perform such a risky trade and risk making enemies.” Lu Luo’s expression was unsightly as he gave Han Li the explanation.

With regards to concubines, there have been Nascent Soul cultivators that trade them, and it is actually quite popular among a few Devil Dao sects. As the conditions of the current exchange were satisfactory, contacting the Nine Nations Union’s enforcers would result in nothing.

Fortunately, this affair shouldn’t put Han Li’s life at risk, but it would be rather troublesome if he were to receive injuries before the trade meet even started.

Moreover, Han Li wasn’t particularly attached to Mu Peiling. Even if he was forced to trade her, he would end up with two grand beauties. It shouldn’t prove to be too much of a loss for him.

Han Li’s expression was completely calm upon hearing Lu Luo’s explanation, but Mu Peiling was full of regret. Had she known that the trade meet had such laws, she wouldn’t have requested to accompany Han Li.

Although she didn’t know much of this Marquis Nanlong, from how he treated other cultivators and his concubines, it was likely that she wouldn’t be able to preserve her maidenhood until Core Formation stage and would be treated like a material good.

Mu Peiling gritted her teeth at the thought of this occurring and her pale complexion faintly revealed a dark shade of red. She didn’t have high hopes that her husband would be able to defeat

him.

Marquis Nanlong sat on the carriage and closely pressured Han Li, asking, “Well? Will Fellow Daoist agree to the exchange or will we have a match with our spiritual sense?”

Silence filled their surroundings for a time. Not only did Lu Luo and Mu Peiling nervously glance at Han Li, but even the two concubines of Marquis Nanlong curiously glanced at the youthful cultivator with an ordinary appearance.

After stroking his chin, Han Li suddenly smiled.

“If it’s a contest of spiritual sense, then I will agree. Since I’ve just recently condensed my Nascent Soul, I coincidentally wish to compare my spiritual sense against other Nascent Soul cultivators. However, if I somehow manage to win, I don’t want the Marquis’s beloved concubines. Instead, I would rather know the true reason Marquis Nanlong has decided to have a spiritual sense competition. I hope the Marquis won’t merely say that I was displeasing to the eye or that he finds my own concubine to be desirable!” Han Li calmly spoke, revealing not a trace of worry.

An indescribable expression flickered over the Marquis’ face, and the others were left at a complete loss.

Marquis Nanlong grew silent for a moment before slowly replying, “Alright, I agree.” His expression appeared completely solemn.

“Sir...” Mu Peiling couldn’t help but call out to Han Li upon seeing him agree to the battle. She wore a complicated expression on her face.

Han Li waved his arm, “It’s nothing. Just a mere contest.”

Lu Luo sighed and warned, “Junior Martial Brother, be careful. If it becomes too much, concede immediately. I will immediately act to protect you.”

Han Li nodded and said nothing further.

At that moment, Marquis Nanlong had already pushed away his concubines and flung his sleeve, launching himself through the air. Azure light flashed from Han Li's body as he also made his approach.

Although the forced trade provision mentioned that it would be best if the Nine Nations Union enforcers to be present, both sides decided to tacitly remain silent of the matter.

When both parties were only about twenty meters away from another, they stopped. Han Li then calmly said, "Although I don't know why the Marquis truly wishes to test the depths of my spiritual sense, the reason clearly isn't shallow. I am quite curious about the matter."

"Fellow Daoist Han is truly intelligent. However, you will only know the reason if your spiritual sense is at least as strong as mine. Were it not for your powerful spiritual sense sweeping past me previously, I wouldn't have tainted my reputation by challenging you," Marquis Nanlong coldly smiled and bluntly said, "However, I don't see your chance of victory being large. The differences in spiritual strength between early and mid Nascent Soul cultivators aren't something to underestimate."

Chapter 676: Spiritual Sense Formation

“Fellow Daoist speaks the truth, but I have no intention of handing over my concubine. I merely wish to exchange a few pointers.” Han Li spoke calmly and soon released his spiritual sense. With the appearance of an astonishing aura, something shot towards towards the Marquis.

“Good.” Marquis Nanlong appeared completely calm and released his spiritual sense. Two streaks of nearly incorporeal force appeared between the two and burst in a collision. A violent gust suddenly appeared and blew out in every direction.

Marquis Nanlong felt alarmed by the development as his initial spiritual sense probe instantly grew several times greater in size. Layers and streams of violent white instantly flew into the gap of space between Han Li and the Marquis, causing their silhouettes to blur as if there were two originless and unmoving shadows .

“Spiritual sense formation! How can this be!? How is Junior Martial Brother Han’s spiritual sense so strong!” Lu Luo couldn’t help but cry out in disbelief.

“Spiritual sense formation? Could my husband win?”

“I’m not sure either, but ordinarily, spiritual sense formation is a divine ability only mid Nascent Soul cultivators can grasp. For Junior Martial Brother Han to be able to use this technique, his main cultivation art must be specialized in spiritual sense. That is the only possible explanation.” Lu Luo’s excited words turned into a pensive mutter halfway through.

Filled with hope by her Martial Ancestor Lu’s explanation, Mu Peiling said, “In that case, my husband must have a fighting chance!”

With a shifting expression, Lu Luo said, “That’s hard to say. There are differences in strength among even similar grade

cultivators. Marquis Nanlong had already entered the mid Nascent Soul stage three hundred years ago. Although his progress has stalled, he is without a doubt only a step away from late Nascent Soul stage. It should be quite difficult for Junior Martial Brother Han to win against this old eccentric!”

When Mu Peiling heard this, her briefly hopeful heart immediately turned ice-cold once again.

At that moment, the explosions in the skies suddenly became far more dense and winds began to continuously revolve, forming a huge ring of white wind around Han Li and the Marquis.

Lu Luo yelped in surprise as an odd expression appeared on his face, “I can’t believe it. Junior Martial Brother isn’t losing.”

Mu Peiling was overjoyed by this and thought to ask something more, but a series of blinding white lights filled the skies. Soon after, claps of thunder rang out and the ring of wind surrounding them ruptured, sweeping up their surroundings in a violent windstorm.

A hundred meters away from them, the others revealed shock as they saw the overbearing squalls arrive towards them.

“Not good!” Lu Luo softly shouted. His figure blurred and blocked Mu Peiling. At the same time, he crossed his hands, summoning a blue light barrier in front of them.

In that short moment, the fierce squall had already arrived at their barrier. Strange creaks continuously sounded out from the wind as if it were a heavy strike. An instant later, there was a deep indentation left behind on the barrier.

Fortunately, the winds quickly scattered and a majority swept past them. The light barrier was soon restored to its original form.

As for Marquis Nanlong’s group of soldier cultivators, they lifted their golden halberds in a disciplined manner, forming a huge barrier of golden light around them and the carriage.

However, the golden light only lasted against the white gale for an instant before shattering. When the remaining gust swept through, the cultivators behind the barrier held their heads in their arms and miserably screamed. Blood bled from every opening of their head in a frightening display.

Only the two concubines were safe due to the carriage's protective restrictions. However, their faces were pale from fear.

Mu Peiling felt her blood turn cold at the sight as she turned her gaze once more to Han Li, mesmerized.

At that moment, Marquis Nanlong coldly snorted. A ball of golden light suddenly appeared and burst into countless streaks of golden light that quickly surrounded his servants.

When the golden light appeared, his servants ceased their screams and stood firm once more. Although they appeared panic-stricken, they no longer seemed to be in pain.

Having saved his subordinates, Marquis Nanlong turned his gaze towards Han Li and revealed bewilderment as if he couldn't believe that Han Li's spiritual sense could rival his own.

In that previous bout, he had released a majority of his spiritual sense but Han Li was able to effortlessly continue. From how relaxed he appeared, it seemed possible that Han Li's spiritual sense was actually stronger than his own.

Marquis Nanlong's contempt had long disappeared and his heart wavered.

At that moment, Han Li widely smiled at him and casually said, "Shall we stop the contest? I fear I might not last if this continues."

With some further thought, Marquis Nanlong's expression relaxed and he said, "Haha! Fellow Daoist Han is far too modest. Let alone your techniques, but even your spiritual sense isn't inferior to my own in the slightest. Let us drop the contest, else we may end up injured."

When Han Li heard this, he inwardly sighed despite the smile on his face. Although he wasn't willing to truly fight against this Marquis Nanlong, from what he had experienced in the contest, Han Li should prove an equal match at the very least.

However, their recent struggle had caused the Marquis to view Han Li with some apprehension and he didn't dare to treat him lightly. Moreover, his spiritual sense was strong enough to meet his conditions. He had a request to make of Han Li.

Marquis South Dragon strangely smiled at Han Li and stealthily sent him a voice transmission, "Since Fellow Daoist Han's spiritual sense is on par with mine, I will tell you the true reason for the contest. It is as Fellow Daoist guessed; I had a different objective in mind for forcibly testing your spiritual sense. However, this matter is quite important and it is inconvenient to speak of it here.

The jade slip contains a map. On the fourth day of the trade meet, there will be a gathering of cultivators as indicated. I will introduce you to these Fellow Daoists, and we will discuss a matter that will benefit us all."

Afterwards, he stroked his storage pouch and took out an exquisite jade slip that he tossed towards Han Li without any regard to Lu Luo.

When Han Li saw this, he immediately extended his hand and took the jade slip. After examining the Marquis for a moment, he placed the jade slip into his storage pouch for later.

The Marquis chuckled at the sight and then descended towards his carriage in a sphere of golden light. The carriage's golden light then appeared once more and he quickly made his way towards Soaring Heavens City with his escort.

The Marquis seemed to ignore Lu Luo in his departure. While other Nascent Soul cultivators would feel indignant and dissatisfied by this treatment, Lu Luo knew of the Marquis' eccentric personality and could only smile wryly.

At that moment, Han Li descended towards Elder Lu and Mu Peiling.

“Sir, are you alright?” When she saw Han Li return, Mu Peiling greeted him with a flushed face as she stared at him with bright eyes.

Although her husband had contested with Marquis Nanlong for only a moment, that recent display of mighty ability had greatly shaken her heart. She felt somewhat more appreciative of her position by his side and faintly developed a sense of security from him.

“It was nothing, merely a bit of effort.” Han Li calmly said. Her sudden display of concern had made his heart throb.

Lu Luo looked at Han Li for a long while with admiration before beaming and said, “Junior Martial Brother, you keep your secrets well. You made me worry for nothing.”

Han Li calmly said, “I never meant to conceal this from my two Senior Martial Brothers, it’s just that you haven’t ever asked me about it, but let’s hurry for now. Those spiritual sense gales will certainly draw the attention of many cultivators.”

Lu Luo instantly agreed, “That’s right. It would be troublesome if this were widely spread! Let’s quickly head to Soaring Skies City!”

Chapter 677: Meeting the Boy

Han Li stood on the side of a mountain and glanced at the huge city walls several kilometers away. He softly said, “This is Soaring Heavens Mountain?”

Lu Luo stood at Han Li’s side and spoke with a similar expression, “Has Junior Martial Brother never seen such a large city before? The Nine Nations Union have expanded this city several times before reaching such a size. Although I wouldn’t dare to say that this is the largest city in the Heavenly South, it definitely is among the top five. The entire city is also made of huge stones from the same source.”

When Han Li heard this, he faintly smiled. What city could possibly best Scattered Star Seas’ Heavenly Star City? Now that city was truly gargantuan existence. Although Soaring Heavens City was a huge city that spanned over fifty kilometers, it still wasn’t something that could be compared to Heavenly Star City.

Han Li didn’t care much of it, but Mu Peiling was clearly amazed by the sight of this stone city.

“Nevertheless, we will have to approach Soaring Heavens City on foot. How troublesome!” Lu Luo shook his hand and spoke with slight dissatisfaction.

Han Li pursed his lips and replied, “The Nine Nations Union can’t help it. There are far too many high grade cultivators that have come. They would have no way of managing the city if they were to come by air. Fortunately, these restrictions are merely superficial against Nascent Soul cultivators like us. If we truly wished to fly, these restrictions couldn’t do anything to us.”

“I didn’t expect for Junior Martial Brother to be so open minded. Alright, let’s go. The sooner we get to the city, the more profit will be had!” Ever since Han Li’s bout with Marquis Nanlong, Senior Martial Brother Lu had treated Han Li in a far greater familiarity.

Han Li nodded with a smile, and the three began to walk towards the city gate in stride.

Because they were in the vicinity of Soaring Heavens City, there were vast crowds entering the city from every direction.

Han Li and Lu Luo already concealed their cultivation as this didn't wish to cause a disturbance. They entered the crowd under the guise of Foundation Establishment cultivators and made way towards the city gate.

Although there were protectors from the Nine Nations Union, they didn't discover anything amiss from Han Li or Lu Luo.

After they entered Soaring Heavens City, they spotted orderly rows of stone buildings. There were stone streets of varying length between each of the stone buildings, forming what seemed to be a crowded weblike pathway.

Since Lu Luo had been at Soaring Heavens in the past, he suggested, "Let's first get a fixed residence. There is no need for us to barge into any inns. There are distinguished pavilions that are specialized for Nascent Soul cultivators like us. We'll be heading there directly."

Han Li didn't raise any objections and followed after Elder Lu with Mu Peiling in tow.

Lu Luo ended up bringing the two towards a corner of the city. A short moment later, the three passed through many roads before arriving in front of a white light barrier. Behind the light barrier laid many pavilions that were simply designed but elegant nonetheless.

There were other cultivators outside the light barrier, peering inside with expressions of admiration and reverence. However, they didn't dare to stay for too long and each of them eventually hurried on their way.

"The restrictions here are only something a Nascent Soul

cultivator can dissolve.” Lu Luo pressed his hand against the light barrier and blue light flickered from his palm. With a woosh, the white light barrier formed a hole from where Lu Luo’s palm had touched it. He then flew inside with a blur, followed by the light barrier closing at an inconceivable speed.

After a moment of surprise, Han Li opened his mouth and spouted out a mist of azure light. The white light barrier flickered upon contact with the azure light and a three meter large hole immediately shattered. Han Li grabbed onto Mu Peiling’s waist and quickly brought her through the light barrier.

Mu Peiling blushed from being in Han Li’s embrace and felt a peculiar emotion in her heart.

Lu Luo appeared amazed at how easily Han Li had broken through the barrier, but his calm soon returned.

Lu Luo pointed to a few of the pavilions with a smile and said, “These pavilions are for the use for any Nascent Soul cultivators and any disciples they may bring. They may chosen at will, but the light restrictions surrounding the pavilions illustrate whether or not they are already occupied. However, not all Nascent Soul cultivators are willing to use this place. There are a few eccentrics that are willing to stay outside the city or at inns.”

As expected, a small portion of the pavilions were already glowing with light restrictions.

Lu Luo pointed to two pavilions a couple hundred of meters away and proposed, “Junior Martial Brother, let’s pick those neighboring pavilions. If anything happens, it will be best if we look after each other.”

After examining them for a moment, Han Li replied, “Let’s do as you say.”

Just as Lu Luo was about to say something else, the white-yellow light barrier covering another pavilion suddenly opened to reveal a

small figure. When this person swept past Han Li and Luo Lu, they astonishedly said, “Yi! Is it not Brother Lu? I didn’t expect for you to arrive so early!”

Han Li hastily peered in the speaker’s direction.

This person was a child with delicate, flawless skin. He was the Child Fire Dragon that Han Li previous saw at the sacred area of the three sects. Once he finished speaking, his bright eyes turned towards Han Li and Mu Peiling, resulting an expression of astonishment.

With his vast memory, he was able to recall them both being among the finalists of the last Sword Trial Assembly. However, Han Li was now only using a superficial cultivation concealment technique, something ineffective against cultivators of the same grade. After a moment of surprise, the boy revealed an expression of understanding.

Lu Luo quickly smiled upon seeing him. It seemed their relationship was quite good. “Hehe! So it turned out to be Fellow Daoist Lan! How are we early? You obviously rushed over here. Ah that’s right, this is our newly joined Elder Han. Junior Martial Brother Han, I believe you’ve met Brother Lan once before. There should be no further need for introductions.

When the Child Fire Dragon heard this, he wryly smiled and said, “So it is true that Fellow Daoist Han entered the Drifting Cloud Sect as a new elder. My eyes were truly awry that day.”

Having heard this, Han Li offered a cursory explanation with a smile, “I had merely heard of the grand reputation of the Sacred Spirit Well Tree and wished to enter the sacred area to take a look. I sincerely hope Fellow Daoist Lan didn’t take offense.”

“Since Fellow Daoist is now an elder of the Drifting Cloud Sect, this matter need not be mentioned further. However, you two have arrived quite timely. I happened to be meeting a few friendly acquaintances of mine at the Crystal Dragon Pavilion for a small

scale trade. How about you two Fellow Daoists come and take a look. Perhaps you might find something you like.” The Child Fire Dragon seemed to have a straightforward temperament to have invited them with a beckon.

Lu Luo joyously said, “To think there would be an exchange so soon. Tch Tch. We’ve definitely come at a good time,” he then hastily turned towards Han Li with his expression quickly turning solemn, “Junior Martial Brother Han, there aren’t many exchanges that occur between Nascent SOul cultivators. We must go, else we could miss some good items.”

Han Li calmly smiled and said, “Then let us follow Senior Martial Brother Lan!”

After Han Li and Luo Lu arranged restrictions outside their pavilions, they followed the Child Fire Dragon out of the residential area.

Han Li had instructed Mu Peiling to stay inside the pavilion for the time being.

The Child Fire Dragon explained in a clear voice, “The Crystal Dragon Pavilion was opened by a good friend of mine from the Nine Nations Union. My good friend has made a wide range of connections, acquainting himself with those from every power. As such, he was able to form this trade meeting. However, In order to prevent any unnecessary trouble, all of those attending will be concealing their true appearances.”

Lu Luo’s heart stirred and he spoke with amazement, “Brother Lan seems to be talking of Daoist Heavencrystal. However, I recall that Daoist Heavencrystal isn’t fond of business matters. Did he truly take the initiative to hold this trade meeting?”

The Child Fire Dragon chuckled and said, “Hehe, I didn’t expect that Fellow Daoist Lu would know of my old friend’s reputation. That’s right, while my old friend isn’t fond of such inconvenience, there are a few required materials that he had been searching for. I

reckon he took the initiative to start this trade meet in order to find them.”

Lu Luo nodded his head, “Oh, if that’s the case, it does seem quite likely.”

As Han Li listened to the two, his expression remained as always.

The three walked towards a pure white pavilion ahead of them. It was three stories tall and grew more narrow towards the top. There was a silver sign that hung from the building with the words “Crystal Dragon Pavilion.”

Chapter 678: Nascent Soul Meeting

“It’s right here. Fellow Daoists, let’s go in.” The Child Fire Dragon smiled at the two and walked towards the Crystal Dragon Pavilion with a swagger.

Once they approached the pavilion’s large gate, Han Li casually took a look inside and revealed surprise. The interior appeared to be that of an ordinary restaurant. Not only was it full of guests that were eating and drinking, there were also several waiters that were scurrying between tables with dishes in hand. The scents of fine wine and food were accompanied with the clanging of cups.

After they pushed open the gates, they saw a foot long wooden plate hung at the side. ‘This building is taken, outsiders are prohibited’ were written on it in pitch-black words.

“That old ghost Heavencrystal is still playing around with silly illusion techniques. Really!” After muttering those words, the Child Fire Dragon paid no more attention to it and walked in with a stride.

When Han Li heard this, his heart stirred and he swept his spiritual sense past the floor. He soon revealed a strange expression, but he continued inside. Once they passed the gate, the guests, waiters, scents and sounds, all disappeared like the pop of a bubble.

Han Li casually swept his gaze at the scene and saw that all that remained was a grey mist surrounding the building. There was merely an old-fashioned table at the center of the room with a copper lamp that was lit with a grey-robed Daoist with an amiable face sitting behind the lamp. He appeared to be sixty years of age and was glancing at the three with a smile.

“I didn’t expect that Brother Lan would arrive, let alone bring guests. This old Daoist’s eyes are rather poor. It seems as if I’ve never seen this azure-robed Fellow daoist before. Could he have

recently entered Nascent Soul?” The grey-robed Daoist smiled and cordially beckoned to them. His intimate manners unconsciously aroused in a good impression amongst them.

The Child Fire Dragon returned the smile, but he spoke with an unexpectedly harsh tone, “Brother Heavencrystal, I’ve brought two uninvited guests. Surely you won’t refuse them?”

“Why would I do that? This place welcomes all Fellow Daoists. Besides, I am acquainted with Fellow Daoist Lu. It is only...” The old Daoist’s gaze hovered towards Han Li.

Han Li took a step forward and saluted him, “I am the Drifting Cloud Sect’s Han Li, a newly ascended Nascent Soul cultivator. I hope Daoist Heavencrystal can provide me some guidance in the future.”

Daoist Heavencrystal pleasantly smiled and said, “So it turned out to be a sect member of wFellow Daoist Lu. From his young age, he certain to have boundless prospects.”

“Enough, old friend. The others should be arriving soon. We’ll be going upstairs.” From his direct words, it seemed the Child Fire Dragon had a rather deep friendship with him.

Daoist Heavencrystal sighed, “Brother Lan is still so impatient. Almost everyone has already arrived. I’m sure a few of the more impatient ones have already started trading as well. Here are two black spirit masks for those Fellow Daoists. Brother Lan, do you need one?” He then flipped his hands and summoned two black wood masks into his hands with a flash of white light. Talisman characters appeared on their surface.

The Child Fire Dragon’s cheeks bulged as if he were annoyed. He snorted and said, “Of course you should know that with my stature, regardless of any illusions I use, I cannot conceal myself.”

“Of course. Please come up. This old man will join you in a bit.” Daoist Heavencrystal casually smiled and tossed the marks to Han

Li and Lu Luo. At that same time, a white streak of light showed towards the mist behind him. The mist disappeared and revealed stairs of glittering light that led to the second floor.

Without any further courtesies, the Child Fire Dragon wordlessly walked around the table and climbed to the second floor. Lu Luo and Han Li saluted the old Daoist before following him up the stairs.

Once Han Li discovered that his mask was exactly the same as Lu Luo's, he wore it without any reservations and climbed up the stairs.

The mask was cold to the touch and soft. To Han Li's surprise, it was so comfortable, it felt as if it wasn't even there.

He turned his head to look at Lu Luo and saw that he also wore the mask, turning his face into an icy wooden carving. Han Li faintly smiled at the sight.

At that moment, the three had already arrived on the second floor. It was well lit with over a hundred fist-sized moonstones embedded in the ceiling and walls.

But what surprised Han Li most of all was that the second floor was several times more spacious than the first floor. It appeared far narrower than the first floor from the outside.

Of course, the second floor wasn't empty. There were tables lined up against the walls with chairs accompanying each of them. There were various clothed cultivators sitting in many of them. From their bodies and hair, it appeared there were men and women of all ages.

When Han Li and company arrived, countless cold glints swept past them.

Many of them clearly recognized the unconcealed Child Fire Dragon; the expressions of their eyes varied anywhere from goodwill, hatred, and indifferences. There were a few gazes that

even carried unconcealable killing intent, suggesting they formed animosity in the past.

The Child Fire Dragon was unconcerned with these gazes and led Han Li and Luo Lu to an empty table. At that moment, Han Lu glanced at the others from the sect.

Because of the masks' concealment, those with formidable spiritual sense such as Han Li were unable to clearly see their faces. However, there was no doubt that each of them were Nascent Soul cultivators from their spiritual Qi fluctuations. There were even two among them that were at mid Nascent Soul stage, but they were sitting alone and none dared to rashly sit next to them.

What appeared to be a small pavilion held at least twenty Nascent Soul cultivators, something that was rarely heard of.

Before this, Han Li hadn't seen so many Nascent Soul eccentrics in one place. It seemed one's cultivation had to be at a similar level to encounter so many cultivators.

Han Li's gaze flickered and it suddenly focused at a particular corner of the floor. As Daoist Heavencrystal had mentioned, there were already a few impatient cultivators that had gathered around a table.

Their lips were moving from voice transmissions and they occasionally exchanged jade boxes and small bottles in some small scale trades.

However, most of the other cultivators were sitting with their eyes closed in meditation. They were waiting for everyone to gather before they started trading. It seemed what was being traded prematurely wasn't anything particularly valuable.

Also, in what seemed to be an attempt to avoid being recognized, many of the cultivators were completely silent, and only spoke to one another through voice transmissions.

The second floor of the pavilion had completely maintained its

silence in a bizarre and stifling manner.

The Child Fire Dragon hadn't bothered to wear a mask, attracting many gazes as a result. Nevertheless, there were none who took the initiative to reveal themselves to him.

Sitting right across from Han Li and company was an extremely fat man, who also wore no mask. His waist was four times thicker than the average person and even caused his chair to slightly deform. Regardless, this person didn't seem to mind in the least. When he saw Han Li glance at him, he shot a beaming smile in his direction. However, the many layers of fat on his face made it difficult to accept his kind intentions.

Sitting at the plump man's side was a very shapely female cultivator. Although she wore a mask, her eyes with vivid and captivating. Still, everyone present was certain of the cunning of those around them, and none paid any particular attention to the woman's charm.

When Han Li saw this, he heard Lu Luo's voice transmission, "Junior martial brother Han, be careful. That fatty may seem harmless, but together with the woman at his side, they are the Devil Dao Harmonious Bond Sect's Flesh Rouge Devils. With their secret pair cultivation techniques, they are able to contend against even mid Nascent Soul cultivators. Avoid provoking them, they are incredibly difficult to deal with!"

When Han Li heard this, he felt his heart tremble and he immediately added their names onto a long list of those he should be wary of. After he finished observing the characteristics of all others in the room, he closed his eyes and silently meditated.

Over the period of a long while, several masked Nascent Soul cultivators continuously entered the room.

Daoist Heavencrystal was the last to enter, drawing the eyes of all the cultivators present. He directly walked to the center of the floor and casually waved his arm, summoning a table and chair towards

him with white light. He then smiled and said, “Everyone should’ve already arrived. If nobody has anything else to say, let us start the trade meet.”

Chapter 679: Scarlet Essence Herb

“Daoist Heavencrystal is far too polite. But since I’ve grown rather impatient, how about I start off?” An embroidered-robed cultivator said with a smile.

“Hehe, since Fellow Daoist insists, so be it.” Daoist Heavencrystal smiled and casually withdrew a few steps, inviting the embroidered-robed cultivators to step forward.

There were no rules given for the trade meeting as the cultivators that were present were rather experienced.

“Hehe, since Brother Heavencrystal agreed, this old man won’t refuse.” The embroidered-robed cultivator boldly stood up and saluted the cultivators in the room. He lightly slapped the storage pouch at his waist and summoned a palm-sized wooden box into his hand with a flash of red light.

The wooden box was refined from a fantastical wood of some sort. Red flames faintly flickered from its dark green body with two intersecting gold and silver restriction talismans laid over it.

This mysterious box attracted the various gazes of those in the room. These experienced cultivators naturally knew that this box was certain to hold a precious item. Seeing this treasure being exchanged at the very start of the trade meet was cause for excitement.

The embroidered-robed man swept his eyes past the crowd in a display of pride. He then pointed at the two talismans on the box, and the box opened by itself once the talismans flew off. Suddenly, a glowing red spirit mushroom slowly floated from the box.

The spirit mushroom was only a few inches large, but the scorching heat that it emitted and its sparkling exterior revealed it to be a divine object - not to mention the red mists that spiralled around it.

As Han Li was dumbstruck from the sight of it, there were already others calling out its name.

A black-clothed sighed and muttered, “Scarlet Essence Mushroom! A three thousand year old Scarlet Essence Mushroom! It only grows where lava flows. It cannot ordinarily be spotted, let alone acquired. Fellow Daoist must be truly skilled!” It was unknown whether he was envious or impressed by his tone.

An uproar was raised among the cultivators. They even began to talk amongst one another.

“Scarlet Essence Mushroom? This is one of the ice-fire spirit mushrooms. It is clearly worthy of its reputation from the impressive Fire Spirit Qi that its emitting.”

When the embroidered-robed man heard that its name was mentioned, his eyes betrayed surprise, but he soon recollected himself and said, “Since Fellow Daoist has recognized this item, there is no further need for me to speak of it. It is a three thousand year old Scarlet Essence Mushroom, a top grade material for fire attribute medicine pills. I will exchange it for either a hundred thousand spirit stones or its equivalent in earth attribute materials.”

‘A hundred thousand spirit stones?’ Han Li was astonished and his heart began to stir. This price was far lower than Han Li expected. This mushroom wasn’t something that could be compared to high grade demon cores; it was on the level of the Ninecurl Spirit Ginseng itself.

Not mentioning his many precious treasures, Han Li had acquired several hundred thousands of spirit stones from the storage pouches that he looted. The disciple of Archsaint Six Dao in particular possessed three thousand mid grade spirit stones, enriching Han Li greatly. It was a sum that was comparable to the entire wealth of many Nascent Soul cultivators.

Of course, these spirit stones were far inferior in value to spirit

tools, magic treasures, and even ancient treasures. After all, there were precious items that couldn't be bought. If he could spent all of his spirit stones on ancient treasures similar to his flower basket and small bell, he would do so without question.

Just as Han Li mused about this, other cultivators were also tempted by the item. Several cultivators promptly stepped forward and sent a few voice transmissions to the embroidered robed cultivators. Afterwards, they took out several items for the cultivator to see.

While the others couldn't see these items clearly, the embroidered-robed cultivator bluntly refused them each with a single glance, causing them to resentfully withdraw.

“Is there anyone else? This three thousand year old Scarlet Essence Mushroom was acquired over six years of immense toil, and it is being sold for only a hundred thousand spirit stones. It definitely isn't expensive. However, I also wish that this item may be exchanged for some suitable earth attribute materials. Even if it is somewhat inferior in comparison, I will still take it. But if there is too much of a difference in value and you merely wish to take advantage of me, don't bother wasting my time.”

As if truly wishing to trade with the item in his hand, he grew impatient from seeing that no one was stepping forward.

Han Li swept his gaze past the other cultivators and noticed that many wore expression of greed, yet none of them stepped forward. It seemed that they didn't believe the price to be too expensive but that they didn't have anything suitable to trade for it.

Even the Child Fire Dragon wore a face of regret. He cultivated a genuine fire attribute cultivation technique, and it would prove incredibly useful towards him.

Seeing that there were no further offers, he helplessly grasped the lid of the wooden box and was about to close it when Han Li sent him a voice transmission, “Don't be so hasty Fellow Daoist.

Would you be interested in an earth-attribute demon core?”

The embroidered robed man stopped upon hearing Han Li. With slight surprise, he replied to Han Li through voice transmission, “You have demon cores? However, my Scarlet Essence Mushroom must be exchanged for a grade seven demon core or several grade six demon cores at the very least.”

Han Li pondered after receiving his reply. He still had a few demon beast cores leftover from refining his medicine pills. Since they came from particularly rare demon beasts, he kept them in case they may have other uses, such as now.

The spirit mushroom could be further matured through use of his green liquid, unlike his demon cores. As for their prices, it was somewhat hard to say. In the Scattered Star Seas, grade seven demon cores were extremely precious, but far less valuable than a Scarlet Essence Mushroom.

However, this was different in the Heavenly South. Not to mention grade six demon cores, even grade five demon cores were rarely seen items. There were few places in the Heavenly South where high grade demon beasts dwelled. In this case, a grade seven demon core was a fair trade for a three thousand year old Scarlet Essence Mushroom.

Having come to a decision, Han Li stood up and walked towards the embroidered-robed cultivator.

This came as a surprise to the Child Fire Dragon and Lu Luo, and they looked at him with amazement.

Han Li took several steps towards the embroidered-robed cultivator and summoned a jade box with a flip of his hand. He then tossed it to cultivator without saying a single word.

The embroidered-robed cultivator calmly caught the box and opened it. After carefully examining it for a long while, his gaze revealed delight.

“We’ve reached a deal!” He beckoned to the floating mushroom and sealed it before handing it over to Han Li. At that same moment, he swiftly placed the jade box into his own storage pouch.

Han Li nodded his head and placed the wooden box into his own storage pouch before turning to his original position.

Lu Luo and the Child Fire Dragon were both completely astounded, but the two tactfully avoided asking Han Li any questions and simply sent him a few words of congratulations. Han Li accepted their words with a tranquil expression.

Nevertheless, Han Li could already feel the many gazes of the seated cultivators examining him once more. Obviously, being able to afford the Scarlet Essence Mushroom had attracted much interest.

However, Han Li was unconcerned. With his current abilities, he had no problems escaping from anything short of a late Nascent Soul cultivator.

“Alright, since this Fellow Daoist has finished trading, let’s have the next Fellow Daoist head up,” Daoist Heavencrystal beamingly smiled at a female cultivator sitting nearby the embroidered-robed man and suggested, “How about you?”

The green-robed woman gracefully replied, “Of course, I shall be presenting my treasures next.”

She stood up and slowly said, “I didn’t have such a good opportunity to acquire as rare a treasure as the previous Fellow Daoist; however, I am proficient in tool refinement techniques, and have refined a Immortal Binding Ring that has never been bonded. So long as someone perform the rites to accept a master, one will be able to make full use of its abilities.

I don’t mean to boast, but while this treasure was created with common materials, it’s might is quite formidable. It is remarkable effective at both restraining enemies and protecting its user.”

With a flutter of her sleeve, a fine white ring flew out and began to fluctuate in size and flicker with light.

Without speaking any further, she pointed to the ring and it suddenly trembled before expanding to three meters in length. The walls of the ring were as thick as an arm and emitted silver talisman characters along with an astonishing spiritual Qi.

Chapter 680: Devilfall Valley

“Since this ring has yet to recognize a master, I am unable to display its full abilities. Of course, you should all know it comes at quite a price. I intend on trading this Immortal Binding Ring for a bottle of Nascent Soul level cultivation pills. If you’re interested in giving an offer, I’ll be taking a look at them.”

Although cultivators present each had their own magic treasures, nurturing multiple magic treasures with differing abilities wasn’t unheard of. Furthermore, this magic treasure was masterless so it can be given to disciples. Of course, magic treasures that were created by Nascent Soul cultivators were far stronger than those created by Core Formation cultivators.

A majority of cultivators also weren’t experts in tool refinement, especially so with Nascent Soul cultivators. Since an expertly refined treasure appeared before them, many grew tempted and wished to trade for them. The woman selected one of the bottles of medicine pills offered to her and smoothly concluded the transaction.

Although this Immortal Binding Ring was far less valuable than the Scarlet Essence Mushroom, it was also much easier to trade for.

The next cultivator stood up before Daoist Heavencrystal called out to him, “I am offering Starsteel Sand for trade. It can be used for...”

The trade meeting went smoothly with each Nascent Soul cultivators taking out their own items, each an undoubtable rarity. They were far beyond what Han Li had previously seen offered at markets, and couldn’t be afforded even with the entirety of a common Core Formation cultivator’s wealth.

When a cultivator’s turn arrived, they naturally took out an item suitable for a cultivator of their rank.

But of course, not everyone made a successful trade. There were a few items that were too unfamiliar, along with those that were desirable but had an unfulfillable price. Nevertheless, these Nascent Soul cultivators were each brimming with experience; there was no possibility of trades with a large disparities in value.

The Child Fire Dragon and Lu Luo were both in front of Han Li and each took out their own items first.

The Child Fire Dragon took out a bowl-sized, tri-colored flower, an ingredient for pill refinement. Although it couldn't be compared with the Scarlet Essence Mushroom, it was still a rare item. However, since there was no one that possessed the item he was looking for, the Poisonmark Wood, he could only sit back down with disappointment.

As for Lu Luo, he ended up with a rather successful transaction. He traded a bottle of something Han Li had never heard of before, Spirit Herb Extract, for a small fire-red sword that hadn't yet recognized a master. It was unknown who he was giving it to, as there was no possibility of refining it for himself given his age.

With Lu Luo's successful transaction came Han Li's turn. Because he successfully traded for the embroidered-robed cultivator's Scarlet Essence Mushroom at the beginning, there were many that were particularly focusing their attention on Han Li.

Han Li calmly stood up and took out two white jade boxes that he had previously prepared, "I have grade six water attribute demon cores and two stalks of thousand year old spirit herbs. I will exchange them for a piece of Auric Essence. But if I can't, I will trade one of the boxes for the whereabouts of Auric Essence as well."

Once Han Li said this, his hands trembled and azure light flickered. The two jade boxes opened at the same time. A red and blue demon core, and two glistening, jade-green spirit herbs were revealed.

‘Auric essence?’ All cultivators around them revealed an odd expression. While these demon cores and the thousand year spirit herbs were precious, they was still a great difference in value in between them.

If he were to truly trade for them, it was quite likely he would only be able to pay for only a small iota of it, nowhere near enough. But if it were information on the whereabouts of Auric Essence, a grade six demon core or a stalk of thousand year old spirit herbs was rather generous.

After all, everyone knew that information alone wasn’t anywhere near as valuable as having the item on hand. Ancient cultivator ruins and areas of value were known by many, but these areas were extremely dangerous to the point where vastly skilled cultivators would find it difficult to escape even with grave injuries.

The most notable example of this would be the Devilfall Valley at the center of the Heavenly South Continent.

Legend has it that it was ancient battlefield from the time of antiquity where any fantastical restrictions were placed by the Devilish cultivators of long past. Perhaps due to the vast damage from the climax of the battle, there were even slim crevices in space itself, destabilizing the entire valley. As a result, the ancient battle had ended in mutual destruction.

The spacial tears and ancient restrictions caused the ancient battlefield to be extremely dangerous. Over the countless years, it was unknown just how many overly confident entered those ruins seeking treasures only to never return.

Any treasures these cultivators may have acquired were always left behind in the valley. After nearly ten thousand years of this continued, no other cultivators dared to try their luck, earning Devilfall Valley the title as deadliest region in the Heavenly South. Despite the knowledge of many treasures contained deep within

the valley, they would only exist in dreams as none dared to seek their own death.

In any case, Auric Essence wasn't something that was commonly known about. As such, each of the cultivators merely glanced at Han Li without sending him any voice transmissions.

When Han Li saw this, he grew somewhat disappointed. In order to hide his wealth, he didn't take out any of his more precious items, preventing him from trading for anything he needed. Nevertheless, he was quite disappointed that nobody knew of any related information, despite the many Nascent Soul cultivators present.

He inwardly sighed and swept his gaze past the group of cultivators. He unconsciously frowned before sitting down with an odd expression flickering from his eyes.

The following cultivator immediately took out black tool refinement materials and began to introduce it.

Han Li half-heartedly listened to the cultivator and closed his eyes.

If Han Li wasn't mistaken, Daoist Heavencrystal betrayed hesitation from his eyes despite his calm expression. While Daoist Heavencrystal might not possess any Auric Essence, it seemed he did have information on where he could get some.

Without much thought, Han Li immediately came to a decision. But as one possessing patient temperament, he left the matter alone for now and simply feigned ignorance. He was confident that with just this clue, he will eventually have an opportunity to acquire the information he needed.

A long while later, the last cultivator finished exchanging for the materials they required.

Daoist Heavencrystal then walked to the center of the floor and smiled, "Fellow Daoists, it appears a majority of you had traded for

the materials that you required. Even if you didn't, it doesn't matter. Our little gathering is merely a tenth of the Nascent Soul cultivators that have arrived at the city. There will be more opportunities to come. While I can't say this for anybody else, I may be holding an even larger trade meet. I hope you Fellow Daoists will be able to participate in it. But before we come to a close, I also have a few items I wish to put up for trade."

Once the old Daoist finished speaking, his hands began to sparkle with white light and he summoned even items from his storage pouch, filling the table.

When the other cultivators saw the items in the table, they were left amazed. Once Han Li saw these items, his expression also greatly changed.

Eight varying monstrous beast puppets were arranged on the table, including a white wolf, azure pythons, and even a red bull.

Although these items were entirely still, they contained astonishing spiritual Qi equivalent to early Core Formation cultivators. They were far more powerful than the huge ape puppets in Han Li's possession, and they weren't recorded in Han Li's puppet sutras either, much to Han Li's bewilderment.

Could this person also be a cultivator of the Thousand Bamboo School? But the Thousand Bamboo School shouldn't have any cultivators at Nascent Soul stage. Could there be another group cultivating their own style of puppets?

As Han Li's mind stirred, he couldn't help but gaze at these puppets, hoping to make out any peculiarities.

But before he could do so, the fatty from the Harmonious Bond Sect smiled and yelped, "Fellow Daoist Heavencrystal, since when did you start cultivating puppet techniques? Did you plan on abandoning your Crystal Light Arts? If that's the case, you have my wholehearted admiration!"

Daoist Heavencrystal grinned, “Brother Ju jests. With my weary body, how could I possibly change my cultivation art. These puppets were merely something I found in some ruins with some other Fellow Daoists. As am I embarrassingly short on money as of current, I must use them for trade. Although their might isn’t great, they will particularly effective in certain situations.”

Chapter 681: Soul Stone

A cultivator with an elderly appearance twirled the beard in his hand and said, “Oh, I am rather interested in these puppets. It is a good life-saving item to give to my youngest disciple, but what does Daoist Heavencrystal want for it?”

Daoist Heavencrystal calmly said, “Hehe, this humble Daoist is looking for particularly rare items from the time of antiquity known as soul stones. Each soul stone may be exchanged for a single puppet beast. These puppets were personally refined from cultivators of antiquity. I reckon that there are no other high grade puppets in the entire world.”

‘Soul stone?’ Upon hearing this unfamiliar name, the cultivators present wore doubtful expression. This was something they had never heard of before.

Daoist Heavencrystal wasn’t surprised by this. He slapped his storage pouch and summoned a thumb-sized jade-green gem into his palm. At first glance, it appeared similar to be wood-attribute spirit stone, but once the cultivators swept their spiritual sense past it, they discovered that the spirit stone emitted an unfathomably cold fluctuations, completely different from that of a wood-attribute spirit stone.

With the gem in his hand, the old Daoist slowly said, “Perhaps there are a few Fellow Daoists that possess this item, but hadn’t known of its name. I happen to have one in my possession so that you may recognize it.”

A Devil Dao cultivator wrapped in black Qi yelped in astonishment, “How odd! It seems similar to ghost energy, but it is far more pure.”

Daoist Heavencrystal straightforwardly replied, “I don’t know what it is that the stone contains, but it definitely isn’t ordinary ghost Qi. Else, I wouldn’t be willing to exchange a single stone for

one of these puppets.”

“Oh! That’s true.” The Devil Dao cultivator tactfully dropped the subject.

When Han Li clearly saw this gem, his expression underneath the mask vastly changed and his eyes flickered.

If he saw correctly, this soul stone was clearly the umbra beast crystals that he obtained from the Umbra Realm. Of course, beast crystals was merely the name used by the natives. Its true name as the cultivators of antiquity called it seemed to be soul stones.

Han Li pondered, ‘This Daoist Heavencrystal not only took out those puppets but he also gathered many soul stones. Both appeared at Heavenvoid Hall. It seems this person...’

The soul stones were clearly rarely seen items. After a long while, only a single cultivator hesitantly took one out and traded it for a single beast puppet.

Daoist Heavencrystal called out several more times, but no one stepped forward. He couldn’t help feel somewhat disappointed despite having predicted this.

Just as he was about to put away the beast puppets, someone suddenly stood up. The old man’s spirits were roused and he glanced at this person with delight, “Fellow Daoist, do you also have soul stones?”

Han Li silently flipped his hand and a green gem appeared in his hand.

This gem was the size of an chicken egg, far larger than the thumb-sized gem that the old Daoist took out. Its icy Qi could be seen by the naked eye.

Daoist Heavencrystal was shocked by the sight and grew vastly delighted, “Fellow Daoist, it is truly rare for a soul stone to be so powerful. How about Fellow Daoist pick two of the puppets? I definitely won’t have you suffer loss.”

Han Li shook his head with a faint smile.

Daoist Heavencrystal wasn't angered in the slightest and amiably asked, "What? Does Fellow Daoist think this is too little? How many would you like?"

Han Li calmly asked, "How about for all of the puppets?"

The old Daoist frowned and gloomily said, "For all six? Doesn't Fellow Daoist feel this is too greedy?"

"Hehe, not at all! You should know understand this from the soul stone's size alone. Moreover, to you, such a large soul stone would..." Han Li stared at Daoist Heavencrystal and abruptly stopped his words.

When Daoist Heavencrystal heard this, his expression changed and gave Han Li a deep, appraising stare. After a moment of silence, he said, "Alright. Such a large soul stone is truly rarely seen. I am in urgent need of this item so I will exchange all of them."

The other cultivators in the room were shocked by what they heard and couldn't help but take a look at the egg-sized gem in Han Li's grasp. A person capable of exchanging for so many rare items as once was certainly someone to take note of.

With an entirely calm expression, he handed over the gem with a lowered head and swept his sleeve over the table, instantly taking the puppets into his storage pouch.

However, the other cultivators didn't notice that Han Li's lips had moved in the instant he lowered his head. A bewildered expression flickered from Daoist Heavencrystal's face when he heard of this and his eyes brightly shined. At that moment, Han Li had already returned to his original position with the puppets in his grasp.

Next, Daoist Heavencrystal announced an end to the trade meet and the many cultivators began to leave.

When Han Li's party left the pavilion, no one spoke until they arrived two streets away. The Child Fire Dragon bluntly spoke with an elderly tone, "Fellow Daoists, I will not be able to accompany you. I have another appointment."

Lu Luo smiled and said, "If Brother Lan has matters to attend to, please go. Our residences are near each other. There will plenty of chances to meet again."

"Yes, I'll be taking my leave!" The Child Fire Dragon bid his farewell without any reservations and walked towards another street.

As Han Li gazed at him from a distance, he smiled and said, "Fellow Daoist Fire Dragon is truly a wonderful person!"

"Because Fellow Daoist Lan mistakenly ate a strange plant when he was young, his appearance is generally that of a child. However, he is forthright and outspoken, and is one of our friends from outside the sect. He is also the sole Ancient Sword Sect elder that is friendly with our Drifting Cloud Sect.

When Han Li heard this, he frowned and said, "You mean to say the elders of the Ancient Sword Sect don't have a high opinion of the Drifting Cloud Sect?"

After taking a glance around, Lu Luo said, "That's right. Junior Martial Brother Han, do you have any plans? Are you going to return to take a rest or will you be purchasing some other items?"

Han Li honestly replied, "There are a few particular materials that I need to buy. I plan on taking a look at the nearby markets alone and seeing whether or not I can obtain unexpected gains."

When Lu Luo heard that Han Li wished to go by himself, he raised no objections and said, "Just as it so happened, I also plan on purchasing some items as well. Let's part ways for now."

As a result, Han Li and Lu Luo immediately split up.

The markets of Soaring Heavens City were countless times larger

than the market city of the Dreamcloud Mountains.

Han Li was walking down a road of the city's western market as he examined the streets on either side. The words Han Li said to Lu Luo weren't false. He did plan on purchasing a few rarer talisman refinement materials in preparations to refine a few high grade talismans.

Although he still possessed some spirit beast hides and blood from his time in the Scattered Star Seas, he lacked supplementary materials such as high grade talisman paper and cinnabar. He needed to raise his skills by an entire realm in preparation to refine the Spirit Subjugation Talisman.

Although he hadn't carefully researched the Spirit Subjugation Talisman, the boneshard that recorded it mentioned that its might was truly powerful. As something that would be able to use it to save his life during a crucial moment, Han Li wasn't about to easily relinquish it.

However, this talisman was far more complicated and difficult than refine ordinary elemental talismans. He had to improve his odds of success by not only improving he talisman refinement abilities but also acquiring a new talisman brush. His original brush was no longer useful.

Unfortunately, while the talisman refinement materials were readily purchasable, a satisfactory brush was hard to come by. He already had encountered two stores before that were selling top grade talisman brushes, but after he examined the, he could only shake his head and depart. While these talisman brushes could be used to refine ordinary high grade talismans, they lacked the ability to refine a secret talisman on the level of the Spirit Subjugation Talisman.

Talisman brushes were only spirit tools that were used by talisman masters, and weren't commonly seen. Most of them were of low or mid grade quality. If a talisman master lacked the magic

power, forcibly using a high grade talisman brush would only increase their odds of failure.

Additionally, talisman masters were often too dedicated to their talisman refinement techniques and didn't spent much time increasing their cultivation, resulting in a cast majority of talisman cultivators being below Core Formation stage. In the entirety of the Heavenly South, there were only a sparse few Core Formation stage talisman refinement masters.

As for any Nascent Soul stage, there were no such abnormal characters as far as Han Li was aware of. A majority of cultivators that reached Nascent Soul stage were specialized talisman refinement masters.

Nascent Soul cultivators were also diverse in their talisman refinement techniques. Most of them would only be able to refine one or two types of high grade talismans for their own use, but because high grade spirit beast hides and high grade beast blood was rare, they couldn't be refined in great number. As for the success rate, it was beyond poor as one could imagine.

This led to single high grade talismans occasionally being worth quite a bit more than a top grade magic tool.

Chapter 682: Torn Talisman

A majority of elemental high grade talismans actually weren't particularly powerful, and were inferior to magic treasures. This often resulted in the abandoned pursuit of five element magic techniques once a cultivator achieved Core Formation.

This, however, did not mean that all high grade magic techniques were useless. To Han Li's knowledge, there were many five element magic techniques that were powerful to the extent that even Nascent Soul cultivators wouldn't dare to directly block them. However, these magic techniques were incredibly difficult to cultivate while comprehending them was rather complicated, and they were even more inconvenient to use. In the time it took to employ them, it would be better to use magic treasures to attack.

However, Han Li had heard other cultivators mention that the Moulan spell warriors broke through these limits and researched many powerful 'spirit techniques' that could be deployed in an instant, enabling their low grade spell warriors to rival enemy cultivators of a similar level without the use of talismans or magic tools. As for their high grade cultivators, they were able to combine their spirit techniques with their magic treasures for double the lethality; this allowed them to overcome similar grade cultivators without problem.

It was these capabilities that forced the several superpowers in the Heavenly South to unite against the Moulan Tribes. Even then only self preservation was possible; they were unable of truly defeating the enemy.

Ever since Han Li had condensed a Nascent Soul, he began to study the shallowest high grade magic techniques in acknowledgement of his shortcomings. However, the speed with which he could employ these few high grade techniques could only be described as tragic. The only way he could see himself utilizing

these techniques was if he were merely smashing through a tortoise's shell. In half the time it took to cast the technique, a cultivator at the same stage could've already killed him eight times over.

Nevertheless, a simultaneous attack from a high grade talisman and magic treasure makes for an extremely deadly combination. If those talismans were able to be used like low grade ones in a barrage of thirty at a time, even late Nascent Soul cultivators would have no choice but to flee the battle. After all, this would be equivalent to the simultaneous strikes of thirty Nascent Soul cultivators. Even if the target cultivator had defenses that were heaven-defying, they were still bound by the limits of the Nascent Soul stage and be incapable of receiving such an attack.

However, this tactic could only remain imaginary as no one would be so wasteful as to consume several hundred thousands of spirit stones in a single attack. Moreover, high grade talismans weren't something that could be purchased in the cultivation world, and a majority of them were auxiliary in nature, not offensive.

As Han Li mused about this, he walked the streets of the market city and continuously browsed through the larger magic tool and mixed good stores. Normally, only the larger shops would have top grade talisman brushes for sale.

There was no need for him to consider the smaller shops. They weren't likely to have anything apart from ordinary magic tools, let alone top grade ones.

While there was a slim possibility of a small store carrying such a rare item, Han Li was unwilling to waste the time necessary to search through each one. With so many shops in Soaring Heavens City, he simply didn't have time to go searching through all of them.

In addition to Han Li, there were many other cultivators walking

down both sides of the street and purchasing their own desired items. While a majority of them were at the Foundation Establishment stage, there was also an occasional Core Formation cultivator. As for Qi Condensation cultivators, there were hardly any of them apart from the city's natives.

Han Li concealed his cultivation as a mid Core Formation cultivator while he browsed through the markets, merely attracting a few respectful glances from Foundation Establishment cultivators. As for Core Formation cultivators, they simply ignored him after a glance when they didn't recognize him. He was able to avoid much attention in this manner and was could take his time browsing through each of the large stores.

Just as Han Li left another pavilion feeling disappointed, he discovered that most of the day had unknowingly passed.

With darkness falling, the various stores began to successively place down moonlight stones. After a moment of hesitation, Han Li decided to look through two more stores before returning to his residence.

Right after coming to this decision, he heard the sounds of a quarrel not far away from him. There were a group of cultivators that had curiously gathered around the source of the noise.

Han Li frowned as he immediately placed his hands behind his back, before he expressionlessly turned around and began to walk back to his residence.

As he took his first step, he heard a fierce and resentful voice, "What, are all of you Drifting Cloud Sect cultivators merely thieves? You want to just walk away after ruining my talisman?"

A young man's voice loudly refuted him with an angry tone, "It isn't that I don't want to pay, but that I am short on spirit stones since I've just bought other items. Also, this is only an elementary mid-grade firecloud talisman. How could it possibly cost three hundred spirit stones? It should only cost a hundred spirit stones

at most. Moreover, didn't I offer to leave my sect medallion here as collateral? I'll return once I've borrowed some spirit stones from my sect members at the inn."

Han Li ceased his steps as the man's voice seemed familiar. It seemed to be someone he recognized from the Drifting Cloud Sect.

Han Li rubbed his chin and pondered for a moment before heading in the direction of the dispute. Regardless of who it was, he was a grand elder of the Drifting Cloud Sect after all. It was unbecoming of him to feign ignorance and walk away.

A short moment later, Han Li found himself looking at a small miscellaneous goods store from a distance. There seemed to be several cultivators standing in front of it in confrontation. Amongst them was a heroic black-clothed figure, Firecloud Mountain's Sun Huo who Han Li had last seen at the Sword Trial Assembly.

In a short twenty years, this youth had experienced a vast increase in cultivation despite the little change to his appearance. He was currently being confronted by three cultivators with unfriendly appearances who seemed to be the shopkeeper and his assistants.

At that moment, the short-bearded shopkeeper glared at Sun Huo and said, "A single worthless medallion is useless to me. You can simply return to the Drifting Cloud Sect and leave it behind, but I can't track you down all the way over to the State of Xi. So quit talking nonsense. Since you don't have any spirit stones, lay out the items in your storage pouch and I will hold them as collateral. As for that Firecloud Talisman, you believe it to only be a mid grade talisman but it is actually a quality good refined by a talisman grandmaster of our Soaring Heavens City. As such it's already generous to only charge three hundred spirit stones. Could it be that all Drifting Cloud Sect cultivators are such scoundrels?"

Once that was said, the shopkeeper glanced at the wooden box in

his assistant's hands and revealed a regretful expression as if he had suffered a great loss.

Sun Huo unexpectedly responded to these words with a smile, "Fine! The things are yours. If you say it, then so be it. This ordinary Firecloud Talisman was refined by a talisman grandmaster."

"What? Are you able to tell whether or not it was refined by a talisman grandmaster? Do you simply wish not to pay us back? In that case, don't blame me for notifying the city's enforcers." The shopkeeper coldly laughed and bluntly threatened him.

Sun Huo's face turned white then red as there was little question as to which party the Nine Nations Union enforcers would favor. Moreover, this matter was vague and unclear so he was all but certain to lose the dispute!

His expression wavered for a long while before he stepped forward. He slapped the storage pouch at his waist and took out a bundle of talismans.

Sun Huo gritted his teeth and said, "Although these talismans aren't of a high grade, they are worth at least three hundred spirit stones."

The shopkeeper's expression relaxed and he reached out to take the talismans, "This will do!"

"Yi! Not this one!" Before the shopkeeper took the talismans, Sun Huo swept his gaze over them and his expression vastly changed as he pulled back the talismans. He immediately took the half-torn yellow talisman back before handing over the rest of the talismans.

The shopkeeper was stunned for a moment before sneering, "Humph! You're so nervous over a torn piece of blank talisman paper? Are you Drifting Cloud Sect cultivators really so poor?" He then reached once more to take the talismans.

But at that moment, a figure suddenly appeared between the two

in a blur.

Sun Huo felt his heart drop while the shopkeeper hastily took several steps back and furiously shouted, “Who are you? What do you think you’re doing?”

The cultivator that interrupted them expressionlessly responded, “It’s nothing. I merely overheard our Drifting Cloud Sect being mentioned in a certain way three times in a row. How about your esteemed self say it to my face?”

Once that was said an astonishing pressure was released, causing the nearby cultivators to recoil in shock. A few of the cultivators with shallower cultivation felt as if the world itself now weighed down on them, and they fell onto their knees.

The two Core Formation cultivators that happened to pass by fared somewhat better but their bodies were also shaken. One of them became panic-stricken and they cried out, “Nascent Soul cultivator! Senior, you...”

Chapter 683: Two Choices

Han Li turned his head and coldly glanced at the two Core Formation cultivators that were passing by, causing them to immediately swallow their words. He didn't recognize the two middle-aged cultivators, nor did he know which sect they belonged to.

At that moment, the shopkeeper and his two assistants had already been thoroughly forced to the ground due to their close proximity to the immense spiritual pressure. They were incapable of moving in the slightest, seeming panic-stricken, only to grow even more terrified upon hearing that Han Li was a Nascent Soul cultivator. They hurriedly tried to beg for forgiveness, but they could barely even gasp for air, let alone speak.

The surrounding cultivators all paled, while a few of the more cowardly ones had already fled in fear of being implicated.

Han Li showed consideration for Sun Huo, and the pressure had little effect on him apart from his initial recoil. But once he recognized Han Li, his expression changed before he deeply saluted him and said, "Disciple Sun Huo pays his respects to Martial Ancestor Han."

Paying no further attention to the three men in front of him, Han Li turned around and looked at the half-torn talisman in Sun Huo's hand. He nodded his head and said, "It seems there is no need for introductions. You already know of my identity."

When Sun Huo recalled the rude words he spoke to Han Li at the sacred area, he felt greatly worried and humbly apologized with sincerity, "Disciple was unaware of Martial Ancestor's true form. I hope he will forgive disciple's arrogant words."

Han Li looked at Sun Huo and slowly said, "I had yet to become a sect elder at that time, so of course I won't blame you. However, that torn talisman of yours seems to have something to do with

me.”

Sun Huo was stunned as something suddenly came to mind. He joyfully said, “Could this ruined talisman be...”

Han Li waved and cut him off, “Leave this matter for later.” Han Li’s eyes then narrowed as he gazed at a silver streak of light flying across the sky.

The only cultivators that were allowed to fly in Soaring Heavens City were obviously the Nine Nations Union protectors. They were responsible for keeping order during the entire duration of the trade fair.

Sun Huo didn’t dare to speak any further and obediently stood still in place. However, his heart was brimming with uncontrollable excitement, and his grasp on the talisman paper grew even more careful.

At that moment, the streak of light arrived before Han Li to reveal a yellow-haired old man possessing mid Core Formation cultivation. A small golden sword was embroidered on his chest, the emblem of an enforcer.

The old man could sense Han Li’s astonishing pressure from a distance. However, this area laid within his jurisdictions. Even if there was a Nascent Soul cultivator showing their might, he had no choice but to confront them.

Once the old man spotted Han Li motionlessly standing on the road, he saluted him and said, “Junior is an enforcer of Soaring Heavens City, Wu Fei. I am unaware as to why Senior is angry. Might I ask how I can help?” Given the vast disparity in their cultivation, it was only natural for the enforcer to speak respectfully.

Hands behind his back, Han Li indifferently said, “It’s not much. I was merely walking through the street when I heard this shopkeeper speak a few words about our Drifting Cloud Sect.

Therefore, I merely wished for him to repeat what he said.”

“Ah! The shopkeeper certainly spouted nonsense. How dare they offend Senior? You three, hurry up and apologize.” The old man felt an immense headache upon hearing Han Li. When the matter pertained to a sect’s reputation, it was hard to say how severe the matter was. As such, he first offered a word of appeasement before rebuking the shopkeeper and his associates.

Han Li immediately withdrew his spiritual pressure, allowing the three to tremblingly crawl up from the ground. With a bloodless complexion, the shopkeeper immediately said, “Senior, Junior’s words were completely mistaken. Junior truly meant no disrespect to your sect. Just now that Fellow Daoist had ruined a firecloud talisman, but Junior will no longer be pursuing any compensation. Junior can only offer his apologies.”

When Han Li heard this, he frowned and his expression grew gloomy. With a sinister smile, Han Li said, “What? You believe that I will let you off so easily? First let me take a look at the firecloud talisman in that box. If it truly was refined by a grandmaster, I will pay the spirit stones on this disciple’s behalf. But if it isn’t, hehe...”

The shopkeeper reacted quickly and hurriedly spoke before Han Li could glance at the wooden box, “There is no need Senior! That firecloud talisman is an ordinary talisman. Junior accepts any punishment!”

Han Li said nothing further and took a glance at the enforcer.

When the old man saw this, he knew what to do. He immediately bowed and said, “Please be at ease Senior. This shopkeeper will be heavily punished for his transgressions. Senior may hand this matter over to me.”

“Since that’s the case, then so be it. I don’t have the leisure to handle such a petty affair. Sun Huo, you’ll be coming with me!” Han Li’s body blurred, and reappeared at Sun Huo’s side. Then

with flashes of blinding yellow light, the two disappeared into the ground.

The cultivators nearby yelled in admiration at such a marvelous earth movement technique. They hadn't seen such a thing before.

Upon seeing Han Li depart, the old man immediately felt relieved. But when he glanced at the three offenders who were heaving large sighs of relief, his expression grew icy, "You three will follow me and tell me the truth about everything that happened. This matter won't be forgiven so easily."

When the shopkeeper heard this, his relief instantly turned to misery.

A moment after this exchange, Han Li appeared with Sun Huo in a flash of yellow light inside a secluded stone building.

Han Li deeply glanced at Sun Huo and said, "Here will be fine. Let me take a look at that torn piece of talisman paper."

"Yes, Martial Ancestor!" Sun Huo presented the torn talisman paper to Han Li without any hesitation.

Han Li took the talisman paper and quickly glanced at it before silently taking out the other half. Under Sun Huo's unwavering gaze, Han Li put the two halves together and found that they matched without a single flaw.

Sun Huo's deepest fear disappeared without a trace before he deeply saluted Han Li without any hesitation, "Sun Huo pays his respect to Master."

Han Li calmly nodded his head and turned the talisman paper to ash with a flicker of red light. Sun Huo was startled by the sight but immediately calmed down. Han Li found the youth's willpower to be satisfactory.

Han Li calmly asked, "It seems you're a descendant of Sun Ergou, but don't go calling me Master in such a hurry. First, how about telling me what generation descendant you are?"

Sun Huo immediately relied, “I am a seventh generation descendant of the ancestor.”

“During that year, [Sun Ergou](#) pledged that the Sun Clan that he raised would hold me as their master, but because of a few peculiar matters, I had to leave the Heavenly South. As such, the Sun Clan has never truly served me nor have I offered the Sun Clan any protection. Now that a descendant of the Sun Clan has successfully entered the cultivation world, that pledge may no longer hold. But since I had some relation to your ancestor, I will give you two choices.”

Han Li smirked and calmly continued, “The first option is that I directly give you some good cultivation supplies, such as medicine pills and magic tools. From then on, there will be no relation between us. Don’t hold any hope that I will show any further consideration towards you. The other choice is that you fulfill the pledge of your ancestor and serve me as my retainer. I would in turn place a restriction on your body to prevent you from betraying me. Also, I will assign you tasks that will be potentially dangerous. However, I will also do my utmost to increase your cultivation and provide you with cultivation guidance. There will be benefits far beyond your imagination and so long as your aptitude isn’t too poor, there may be hope of you achieving Core Formation.”

Once this was said, Sun Huo’s expression wavered and he appeared to be at a complete loss for a moment. It was clear that this scenario was far from what he had expected.

After a long while, Sun Huo’s expression grew resolute, “Martial Ancestor, I...”

Han Li abruptly interrupted Sun Huo and said, “There is no need to rush. Give me your answer once the trade fair ends. Consider this an opportunity for you to make certain of your decision. Take this time to make careful deliberations and you find me at my cave residence once you return to the State of Xi.”

Sun Huo felt that this was a rather generous proposal after some further thought and hastily agreed, “Disciple will do as you command. Many thanks for your understanding, Martial Ancestor!”

“Good. Now, that that’s taken care of I have other matters to attend to. Look after yourself!” Han Li nodded with a relaxed expression and disappeared in a flash of yellow light.

Sun Huo didn’t leave immediately. Instead, he muttered to himself for a long while and sighed before slowly walking out.

By the time Sun Huo was leaving, Han Li had already returned to his residence and raised his head to look at the night sky while a strange expression slowly surfaced on his face.

Sun Ergou was luggage carrier that was roped into serving Han Li (first appeared in chapter 100). In the past, he looked after Crooked Soul while Han Li was at Yellow Maple Valley. In chapter 335, Sun Ergou swore servitude to Han Li in exchange for the protection of his clan. He was given torn talisman paper as an identifier.

Chapter 684: Ancient Puppets

Mu Peiling was currently seated in the first floor of their pavilion when Han Li arrived. When she saw him, she immediately stood up and greeted him with bright eyes and a graceful curtsy.

Han Li waved his arm and had her stand, “There is no need to wait on me when I’m not around. During the trade fair it will be inconvenient for me to be with you, so you may do as you wish. Keep this on hand. If you encounter something important or dangerous, just pour your spiritual power into it. Not only will it cover you in a spirit barrier, but I will also know your exact location so long as you are within five hundred kilometers.”

Han Li then took out a pair of blue jade ornaments and handed one over to her.

Mu Peiling blushed slightly and whispered, “Many thanks, my Lord!” She then took the jade ornament and hung it at her waist.

After telling Mu Peiling that he was turning in for the night, Han Li walked up to the second floor.

Once she saw Han Li had disappeared from sight, she glanced at the jade ornament on her waist and wore a complicated expression.

Han Li casually picked a room and began meditating on the bed. After two hours of rest, he opened his eyes and glanced out the window before muttering a few words to himself, “It’s just about time. I should go and pay a visit.”

Han Li silently left the pavilion and headed directly to a familiar area of Soaring Heavens City. He arrived shortly after at the building that he had previously visited.

He stared at the silver signboard with “Crystal Dragon Pavilion” written in gold as he rubbed his chin and glanced into the pitch-black interior before promptly heading inside.

Just as Han Li entered the building, the entire room suddenly brightened. Sitting at the end of a long table, Daoist Heavencrystal smiled at Han Li and said, “Welcome Fellow Daoist! You honor my pavilion with your presence once more, and you’re right on time. I didn’t expect Fellow Daoist Han to be such a punctual character. ”

“Since I’m the one that took the initiative to make the appointment, how could I be late? Judging by Daoist Heavencrystal’s appearance, it appeared as if you’ve waited for some time. You gave me quite the scare!” Han Li swept his arm and an invisible force gently closed the door behind him.

Daoist Heavencrystal chuckled and said, “After you left, you suddenly sent a voice transmission saying that you have more soul stones. Were you telling the truth?” The old Daoist narrowed his eyes in doubt as he spoke.

Han Li replied by simply slapping his storage pouch and taking out a green gem that was just as large as the one he took out earlier in the day. It was glistening and emitted an astonishing Yin Qi while Han Li gazed at the old Daoist in silence.

After seeing how Han Li took out a soul stone of a similar grade as the one from before, his face revealed a trace of excitement and he impatiently said, “It’s clear that you were telling the truth. If Brother Han has even more soul stones of this quality, this humble Daoist is willing to buy all of them from you. Spirit stones, materials, please don’t hesitate to name your conditions!”

“Daoist Heavencrystal, don’t be so hasty. I definitely plan on trading soul stones with you, but before that, I wish to ask you two questions. So long as you answer them to my satisfaction, consider the soul stone yours.” Han Li casually tossed the soul stone over to the Daoist Heavencrystal as he finished speaking.

Daoist Heavencrystal caught the soul stone with slight surprise as he stared at the item, bewildered. After a long moment of silence, he sighed and said, “Fellow Daoist truly acts magnanimously! It

seems the questions won't be simple. So long as I am able to answer, this humble Daoist will be certain to satisfy you." Once that was said, Daoist Heavencrystal carefully put away the soul stone and recovered his calm expression.

"Since you've agreed, I'll be blunt. Do you have any information on Auric Essence? When I mentioned this information during the exchange, your expression grew odd. You seem to know something."

Maintaining a calm expression, Daoist Heavencrystal slowly replied, "That's right, this humble Daoist does have some information on Auric Essence. However, this information isn't reliable and as such I was unable to make the trade earlier. If Fellow Daoist Han truly wishes to know, I can tell you."

"Even if the information is inaccurate, I still wish to hear it. Please, go ahead." Although Han Li had predicted this would be the case, he smiled nevertheless.

"Even if I don't say anything, Fellow Daoist will come to know this in a few days. According to my old friend, the manager of an auction house, there is a chunk of auric essence that will be put up for auction for the duration of the trade meet. However, it seems that the owner of the Auric Essence only wishes to trade it for another item. Since they've yet to officially put it up for action, the matter is still uncertain. However, if the Auric Essence is truly put up for auction, those sword cultivation sects would be willing to spend their entire fortunes to acquire it. Fellow Daoist's hopes of acquiring it are truly poor!"

Han Li's happy expression was gradually replaced by a wry smile, "While a three thousand year old Scarlet Essence Mushroom might be worth a hundred thousand spirit stones, something as rare as a chunk of auric essence should be valued at several hundred thousand. If put up for auction, that cost could double."

He was still aware of his limitations. Although he possessed

plenty of wealth, he couldn't compare with entire sects.

After that was said, there was slight change in Han Li's thoughts. He calmly said, "Regardless, I must thank Fellow Daoist for the information. Knowing this, I have the chance to prepare some more spirit stones in advance. Ah yes, would Fellow Daoist happen to know the identity of the owner of the Auric Essence? I wish to pay them a visit ahead of time."

The old Daoist twirled his long beard and smiled, "I am not sure of their identity. I only know that this person is a Nascent Soul cultivator from the Nine Nations Union. They are currently staying at a small mountain to the west of the city. If Fellow Daoist makes the attempt, it shouldn't be too hard to find them."

"Many thanks for Fellow Daoist's information. That will be enough information with regards to the Auric Essence. For my next question, I wish for Fellow Daoist Heavencrystal to tell me about those soul stones."

The old Daoist's amiable expression instantly changed upon hearing Han Li. With bright, flickering eyes, he sullenly asked, "Fellow Daoist, what do you mean? This humble Daoist doesn't entirely understand."

Han Li unwaveringly gazed at the old Daoist and said, "I won't conceal that I also understand a bit about puppet refinement. Moreover, I found some ancient puppet remains from an ancient cultivator's cave residence and it was within those remains that I found these soul stones. If I guessed correctly, these soul stones should be crucial for how ancient cultivators refined puppets. From how you are gathering these soul stones, it seems like that you've acquired a method to refine ancient puppets, and you plan on personally refining some particularly powerful ones. Am I correct? If that is the case, could you tell me more about it?"

In the same instant he said those words, Han Li had immediately grew vigilant. Although it was unlikely, Han Li put himself on

guard in case the old Daoist suddenly launched an attack.

When Daoist Heavencrystal heard this, his face became expressionless and his eyes became exceptionally cold. He then stared at Han Li in silence.

Han Li became particularly careful once he saw the old cultivator's reaction, but his expression still remained calm. He slapped his storage pouch and he took out a palm-sized jade box. He then opened the jade box and slid it across the table to the old Daoist, revealing two soul stones that were even larger than the ones from before.

Daoist Heavencrystal's icy expression was eventually broken with excitement. With an astonished expression, he gloomily asked, "How did you acquire such large soul stones? Do you have more?"

When Han Li heard this, he smiled at Daoist Heavencrystal but said nothing.

The old Daoist responded to his silence by saying, "Humph! I can answer your question, but in exchange, you must tell me how you acquired these soul stones."

"That's not a problem!" Han Li had already anticipated this would happen and instantly replied.

Daoist Heavencrystal coldly said, "It is as you've said. This humble Daoist discovered a refinement method in ancient cultivator ruins with a few friends. According to what was recorded, these puppets were immensely powerful, but the materials they required were proportionately precious. Moreover, they each required an appropriate soul stone to refine.

However, these soul stones are immensely difficult to find. Up until now, I haven't been able to find many. Why else would I directly trade for them so impatiently? Now, it is Fellow Daoist Han's turn to tell me how he found so many soul stones."

Han Li calmly replied, “It is quite simple. I previously had no idea that ancient cultivators called these items soul stones. I had merely known them as something produced within Umbra Beasts and had to spend an enormous amount of effort just to acquire a few of them.”

Excitement flickered within the old Daoist’s eyes and he hastily said, “Umbra beasts? I haven’t heard of them before. Where would you find such demon beasts?”

Instead of answering his question, Han Li unhurriedly asked, “Would Fellow Daoist be willing to let me take a look at which type of puppets you plan on refining? Or perhaps even the puppet designs that you acquired?”

Chapter 685: Meeting the Marquis

Once the old Daoist heard what Han Li wanted, his uncontrollable excitement promptly faded away. With his newly restored calm, he said, “It seems Fellow Daoist Han plans on using this to extort me.”

Han Li calmly said, “Extort? Those words are mistaken. Until now, I’ve never made any demands of you; rather, I gifted you with several rare soul stones. If Fellow Daoist doesn’t feel this arrangement to be profitable, just pretend I never asked the second question, and you can keep those soul stones.”

Daoist Heavencrystal’s expression relaxed and then began to waver while Han Li simply stood at the side without urging him in the slightest.

After a long while, the old Daoist coldly said, “If I give you the puppet designs, you will more or less be able to tell whether they are legitimate. But how can I possibly know if you were telling the truth about the Umbra Beasts?”

Han Li unhurriedly responded with a tranquil tone, “To tell the truth, even if Fellow Daoist knew where the Umbra Beasts are, he would have no method of getting there. Not only is that place deadly beyond belief, but even if one is fortunate enough to enter, there is no way to return. Even I was only barely able to escape alive. Even if you don’t believe me, my soul stones are genuine all the same. I’ll give a portion of them to you for the puppet refinement designs. Enough so that Fellow Daoist definitely won’t suffer a loss. Besides, what use are puppet refinement methods without the soul stones required to use them.”

Daoist Heavencrystal frowned and revealed a trace of hesitation.

After the old Daoist deliberated on what there was to gain and lose, his expression relaxed before he said, “Fine! I have no interest in mulling over whether the supposed source of your soul stones is

real. I will only ask how many soul stones you plan on using to exchange for the puppet refinement designs? If it's too few, I would rather just monopolize them."

While Han Li was happy about this outcome, he betrayed none of it in his voice, "I will have to see the value of the ancient puppet designs first. If they are only on the level of the puppets that were traded during the day, then I have no interest in looking at them."

The old Daoist wore an odd expression, "Those puppets were only defective goods I found. From what you've said, it seems the more powerful these puppets are the more soul stones you are willing to pay."

Han Li pursed his lips, "That's right. If there are designs to refine a puppet that can match the strike of a Nascent Soul cultivator I would be willing to exchange thirty spirit stones for it."

Daoist Heavencrystal seriously asked, "Would these soul stones be of the same quality as the ones you've given from the start?"

'Could there truly be designs for ancient puppets on the level of Nascent Soul cultivators?' Han Li was amazed at the prospect and immediately grew overjoyed. Without any restraint, he said, "Since when have my words been false?"

"Fine. This jade slip contains the designs for the ancient puppets. I will be directly giving it to you, not lending it." The old Daoist quickly took out a white jade slip from his storage pouch and tossed it to Han Li while a cunning expression appeared on his face.

Han Li was stunned by his actions and faintly felt like something was amiss. After some thought, he bluntly took the jade slip and swept his spiritual sense through it. After a long while, Han Li's complexion fluctuated between red and white before he started glaring at Daoist Heavencrystal in silence.

The old man beamed back at him and said, "What's wrong? The

greatest of these puppet designs are able to match the strike of a mid Nascent Soul stage cultivator. Is there something not in accordance with your request?”

Han Li angrily said, “Humph! What part isn’t? The main ingredients for these puppets are heaven-defying materials on the level of ten thousand year old Ironwood. And the supplementary materials aren’t just rare, I’ve never even heard of them. Where am I supposed to find them?”

“Hehe! You have this humble Daoist’s sympathies, but there is little I can do. Look on the bright side, there’s an illustration accompanying each of the materials. Perhaps Fellow Daoist may come across them with enough luck and will even manage to acquire enough to make a puppet!”

As the old Daoist anticipated, Han Li’s expression quickly grew furious and he asked, “Could it be Fellow Daoist Heavencrystal has already found the materials? Why else would he be gathering soul stones?”

With a calm expression, Daoist Heavencrystal said, “When did this humble Daoist say that he would be personally refining the puppets? I merely found two half-finished high grade puppets from the ruins. With these soul stones, I’ll be able to use them. There is no need for me to create them from scratch.”

“You...” After hearing this Han Li grew silent for a long while.

“Alright, this humble Daoist already gave you the puppet refinement designs. Now about the...”

“They’re yours!” Before the old Daoist could even finish speaking with his insincere smile, Han Li unhappily swept his sleeve across the table. With a flicker of green light, a small pile of soul stones appeared.

Daoist Heavencrystal was overjoyed, but he thought he should say something further out of embarrassment. Han Li dismissed

this by waving his arm and saying, “Because I was careless, I suffered quite a loss, but I have no complaints. Now that the debt has been settled, I will be taking my leave.” Han Li gave a salute before gloomily leaving the building.

The old Daoist glaced at Han Li’s departing figure and shook his head with closed eyes. He then nodded his head and excitedly placed the pile of gems into his storage pouch. He had managed to trade some unusable puppet designs for so many soul stones. It was only natural for him to feel satisfied. With these soul stones, he will be able complete those half finished puppets. However, the old Daoist was truly shocked to see Han Li take out so many soul stones and

couldn’t help but think higher of him.

Unbeknownst to the old Daoist, Han Li’s gloomy expression had completely disappeared when he walked several streets away. Instead, he was holding onto the white jade slip with a strange smile on his face.

While ten thousand year old Ironwood would prove difficult for others to acquire, it would only take Han Li a bit of time. As for the supposedly unknown materials, they seemed to be salvageable from the remains of the puppets he found in Heavenvoid Hall if he remembered correctly.

If luck would have it, he should be able to gather the materials needed to create several high grade puppets. With strength rivalling Nascent Soul cultivators, these puppets would increase his combat power severalfold. His previously obsolete puppet techniques were about to once again become one of his killing moves.

Furthermore, the jade slip also contained several designs for puppets that were equivalent to of Core Formation cultivators. Although they could be considered rare, they were still purchasable with large quantities of spirit stones. These weaker

puppets might not pose a threat to Nascent Soul cultivators when in small groups, but if he were to create several hundreds of them they would have the power to force a Nascent Soul cultivator to dodge.

However, these were simply musings. Even the lowest grade puppet designs had a cost equivalent to common magic treasures. Creating several tens of them, not to mention several hundred, was something that Han Li couldn't afford at the moment.

Refining several hundred of the Thousand Bamboo School's grade three puppets had nearly bankrupted him. Even after selling off most of his demon beast materials at the time, he was still barely able to afford them. The cost of the Nascent Soul level puppets paled even more in comparison. Han Li wryly smiled at the thought and gained his bearings before heading towards the city's west gate.

Although the day was already late, it made no difference to him whether or not the sun was shining. As such, he decided that it was still a good time to seek out the owner of the Auric Essence.

...

With the official start of the trade fair, cultivators from various regions of the Heavenly South Continent now crowded the city. On the start of the second day, auction houses began to start accepting bids on various valuables. The rare goods that were displayed attracted the eyes of many wealthy cultivators.

A middle-aged cultivator standing at the very front of the hall wore a wide smile on his face and said, "The chunk of Auric Essence is sold to this Fellow Daoist for seven million six hundred thousand spirit stones."

There was an emerald tray sitting on top of a red wood table which had a walnut-sized piece of faint gold ore that appeared entirely unremarkable.

Afterwards, a silver-robed cultivator excitedly walked forward and handed over the spirit stones before acquiring the Auric Essence.

Sitting in the audience, Han Li simply sighed before taking his leave from the auction hall. Although the following items that were to be auctioned were even more precious, he had little desire for them.

On that night, he was able to easily find the owner of the Auric Essence with his spiritual sense. However, the owner would only exchange it for a grade seven demon beast egg or a legendary treasure refinement material named Divine Unity Paste. Possessing neither, Han Li could only depart in disappointment.

But from what was said, Han Li realized that he only possessed enough auric essence to temper seventy of his swords.

But despite this, Han Li had still participated in the auction for the Auric Essence. But once the price exceeded five million spirit stones, Han Li had completely given up. It seemed it would still be quite a while before he could complete the Aureate Sword Formation.

Having left the auction, Han Li went around the city, buying supplementary materials for puppet refinement. After he finished, he headed towards a corner of the city.

He recalled what Marquis Nanlong had previously said. As it was already the fourth day of the trade fair, he curiously headed towards the location mentioned in the jade slip.

After Han Li swept the surroundings with his spiritual sense, he stood in front of a stone building with an ordinary appearance. He approached the door, and it opened before he even knocked on it.

A long-bearded, purple-robed man wearing a jade crown then walked out of the building.

Marquis Nanlong spoke rather enthusiastically, “Fellow Daoist

Han, you've arrived. Let me introduce you to our associates."

Chapter 686: Secret Meeting

“Thank you for the trouble Marquis. And apologies for the wait!” After a few polite words, Han Li followed Marquis Nanlong inside.

The building’s interior was completely bare, to Han Li’s shock. But after he swept his spiritual sense through the building, he discovered restriction fluctuations throughout.

The Marquis smiled upon sensing Han Li’s actions and said, “This small trick of mine can’t be concealed from Fellow Daoist Han of course. Please follow me.” He then formed an incantation gesture with his hand and flung a golden mist from his sleeve.

With the appearance of the golden mist, the unremarkable interior flickered with white light, revealing a set of dark stone steps.

Marquis Nanlong wordlessly descended down the stairs. Han Li frowned, but he followed him all the same.

The stairs were rather short. After only a moment, they arrived before a small underground hall.

There were a few moonlight stones that were softly illuminating the room.

The hall had eight cultivators. Six of them were sitting and the other two were a man and woman pair standing together.

When Marquis Nanlong and Han Li walked in, all of them simultaneously glanced at them.

“It’s you!” The man that was standing couldn’t help but shout in shock at the sight of Han Li’s appearance.

A bright glint appeared from Han Li’s eyes. His sights fell onto the face of a late Core Formation cultivator. He caught sight of a deeply familiar silver mask. After a moment of shock, Han Li sneered.

That man was the young master of the Ghost Spirit Sect, [Wang Chan](#), who had pursued him in the past. He had the same silver mask, but the youthful rage contained in his eyes was replaced with an varied arrangement of emotions.

“I didn’t expect that I’d see an old friend here. What a surprise!”

“How is this possible? You... You condensed a Nascent Soul?” The Ghost Spirit Sect’s young master voice was hoarser than from his youth, but the terror in his voice was unmistakable.

The black-robed, middle-aged scholar sitting in front of him coldly asked, “What the matter? You recognize this Fellow Daoist?”

“Second Uncle, this person is the Yellow Maple Cultivator surnamed Han. During that year, he...”

The middle-aged scholar revealed a trace of shock, but he frowned and decisively said, “There is no need to speak of it. Fellow Daoist Han is already a Nascent Sou cultivator. He won’t bring himself down to a junior’s level.”

He then gently smiled at Han Li and amiably said, “I am the Ghost Spirit Sect Master Wang Tiangu. My nephew had an overexaggerated opinion of his own abilities in the past and had committed many offenses, but I hope Fellow Daoist Han will overlook these matters for my sake.”

“Those matters with Fellow Daoist Wang is merely a matter of the past. With so many years gone by, how could I still bear a grudge? Your esteemed self need not worry!”

Han Li glanced at the black-robed man and smiled as if he truly planned to let bygones be bygones. However, Han Li inwardly sneered. The Ghost Spirit Sect’s young master had nearly taken his life two times, forcing him to take the risk of leaving the Heavenly South. How could such hatred be easily resolved?

Were it not for the many Nascent Soul cultivators present, and

the Ghost Spirit Sect Master in particular, he would've immediately taken Wang Chan's life. For now, all he could do was examine the others and see whether or not they were Devil Dao cultivators. If he didn't keep his grudge in check, it was possible that he would be surrounded.

At that moment, Marquis Nanlong took the opportunity to cut in, "Hehe, so it turned out that Fellow Daoist was from Yellow Maple Valley. I originally believed you came from the Drifting Cloud Sect. However, it is great that Fellow Daoist was able to let go of this old enmity. After all, I'm sure that everyone I've invited doesn't wish to see such an unhappy affair occur."

Wang Tiangu smiled, but as one of shrewd mind, he wasn't about to easily believe Han Li's words. He then nodded and said, "Fellow Daoist's open heart has truly earned my admiration. Be completely at ease Fellow Daoist Han. When I return I will most certainly punish my nephew. But for Fellow Daoist Han to have climbed from Foundation Establishment stage to Nascent Soul stage in a mere two hundred years, that is quite unbelievable. Perhaps in a few more

hundred years, it may be possible for Fellow Daoist to reach late Nascent Soul stage. As the rest of our aptitudes are poor, it is a rather unattainable goal."

Once that was said, all of the other cultivators present has vastly changed expressions.

Han Li inwardly cursed and felt bone aching hatred towards the Ghost Spirit Sect Master. This clear word of praise intended to mark a target on him.

After a long moment of silence, a tan man asked with an odd tone, "Fellow Daoist hasn't yet

reached three hundred years of age?"

"Sect Master Wang must be joking. I've only recently entered

Nascent Soul stage. How could I dare to have high hopes of achieving late Nascent Soul stage? It would take countless years.” Han Li casually touched on the matter before sweeping his gaze past everyone in the room.

At that moment, he discovered that there was an amazingly beautiful late Core Formation woman standing at Wang Chan’s side. She was also standing behind Wang Tiangu.

The woman’s calm appearance suggested that she was an exceptional character. He had heard the the top clan in the State of Yue, the Yan Clan, had secretly left the country to immediately join the Ghost Spirit Sect. Additionally, this woman Yan Ruyan had married Wang Chan and possessed Heavenly Spirit Roots. Han Li couldn’t help but suspect this woman was her.

As for the six that were seated, they were all Nascent Soul cultivators. The only one that was a mid Nascent Soul stage cultivator apart from the Marquis was a white-clothed beardless old man.

After taking several more glances at those present, Han Li’s gaze met the old man’s and he

immediately shivered. His gaze contained a penetrating and chilling cold. However, Han Li had casually turned his head and avoided his gaze.

When the old man saw this, he faintly smiled.

At that moment, Marquis Nanlong called out for Han Li to sit down. Without any hesitation, Han Li found an empty seat and sat down with undue deliberation. Afterwards, he glanced at Wang Chan with a mysterious gaze.

Although the young master of the Ghost Spirit Sect was full of terror, he managed to keep a calm exterior in the presence of Wang Tiangu. Regardless, he still felt immense trepidation at what Han Li’s eyes seemed to suggest.

In the past, their cultivation were a match, but his current jump to Nascent Soul stage was much cause of resentment and alarm. As of Yan Ruyan, she glanced at Han Li with bright eyes. It was unknown what she was thinking.

Once Han Li saw this, he sneered before paying them no further heed.

As the group's leader, Marquis Nanlong stood at their center and spoke with a deep tone, "There are Fellow Daoists that are from the Righteous Dao, Devilish Dao, and there are even a few vagrant cultivators among you. However, you are all similar in which your spiritual senses are exceptionally vast. It is for that reason that I've asked all you Fellow Daoists to come here today.

A portion of you should already have a general idea of the matter, but a majority should be ignorant of the matter. I will be giving a thorough briefing on the matter before everyone can decide to participate in the matter. If you are unwilling, I will not force you."

When Han Li heard this, his spirits were roused. The heart of the matter has finally arrived.

A stern-faced cultivator sitting across from the black-robed man suddenly said, "Hehe! I don't care about the others, but why are those two Ghost Spirit Sect Juniors here? Don't tell me that their spiritual senses are a match with ours." At that same moment, he gave a hostile glance at Wang Tiangu as if they were enemies.

The Marquis predicted this would happen and spoke as if he already had an answer, "Fellow Daoist Long, you will have to overlook it. Although their cultivation isn't very high, they are proficient in secret techniques. When they later join their spiritual senses with ours, they will provide a significant boost. You should know that it is difficult to find cultivators with spiritual senses as powerful as ours, regardless of how their spiritual sense became so strong."

The stern-faced cultivator expressionlessly replied, “Since that’s the case, pretend I never said anything!”

The other cultivators had no complaints and glanced at Marquis Nanlong, waiting for him to start.

Marquis slowly swept his eyes past everyone present and slowly said, “The reason I’ve gathered everyone here is for the purpose of traveling to the Moulan Plains.”

“The Moulan Plains?” Marquis Nanlong’s words came as a large surprise to most of those present, Han Li included.

Wang Chan was last seen in chapter 363, and had tormented Han Li several times in the past.

Chapter 687: Cang Kuns Buried Treasure

“Brother Nanlong, did you speak correctly? The Moulan Plains?” The stern-faced cultivator frowned, speaking as if he couldn’t believe what he had heard.

The other cultivators didn’t fare much better. But since all of them were old eccentrics that had faced countless hardships, they were able to preserve their calm in spite of their turbulent emotions as they waited for Marquis Nanlong’s reply.

Marquis Nanlong calmly explained, “Fellow Daoist misunderstands. I didn’t mean that we would head deep into the Moulan Plains, merely fifty kilometers within its borders.”

The stern-face cultivator shook his head as if greatly fearful of the idea, “That is still extremely dangerous. The Moulan Tribes have been honing their strength for many years already, and have become restless. The edge of the Moulan Plains has already become a danger zone. I fear that many Nascent Soul level spell warriors will be gathered there. Although only a few of those spell warriors possessed a magic treasure, their cultivation is still on par with ours. Additionally, their spirit techniques are not only vastly powerful, but they are extremely adaptable as well. If we were discovered, it would be difficult to escape unharmed.”

Marquis Nanlong sullenly said, “Of course I know how difficult they are. In the past, I fought against a Nascent Soul spell warrior for three entire days. Although his cultivation was on par with mine and his magic treasure was greatly inferior, the battle had ended in stalemate.”

“Since that’s the case, there must be an important reason why Fellow Daoist intends to go there. Why else would Brother Nanlong brave such danger?”

“Hehe, Brother Wang truly understands me. Have any of you Fellow Daoists of the name of Master Cang Kun?”

A bright glint flickered from the eyes of the old woman that had yet to speak, “Master Cang Kun! Wasn’t that the mad cultivator that suppressed both the Righteous and Devilish Dao five thousand years ago?”

With an odd expression, the Marquis said with a strange voice, “Lady Tai is correct. It was that madman that wreaked havoc against both the Righteous and Devilish Dao in the past. Although no one had officially concede this, the daring mad cultivator was definitely the greatest vagrant cultivator during that time. He had profound abilities swept past many fearsome opponents in the Heavenly South. Even the great elder of the Harmonious Bond Sect and the Righteous Dao Alliance Leader, the number one figures of both sides at the time, didn’t dare to say that they could prevail against the mad cultivator.”

Wang Tiangu asked with an odd expression, “So Fellow Daoist Nanlong means to say that this matter is related to the mad cultivator?”

The Marquis heavily said, “Hehe! It is as Brother Wang says. We will be heading to where Master Cang Kun died. It is a meticulously hidden cave residence.”

The old woman strongly shook her head in disbelief, “Impossible! Wasn’t that madman killed after being surrounded by many of his enemies?”

Marquis Nanlong simply smiled and was give an explanation when the other mid Nascent Soul cultivator, the white-clothed old man, suddenly said, “Master Cang Kun wasn’t killed by the attack. Rather he was forced to self detonate two of his puppet incarnations to create the opportunity to escape. The cultivators who surrounded him were none the wiser and had believed that one of the incarnations was his true body. However, the battle had greatly injured Master Cang Kun’s vitality and it was extremely difficult for him to restore his abilities.

“As a result, he spent several years there in recover, and his original cave residence disappeared alongside any messages. It was only when Fellow Daoist Nanlong and I recently discovered his place of death that we came across this knowledge from a remnant message. Once Master Cang Kun disappeared, he braved Devilfall Valley and was the very first person to make it out alive.”

The old woman sharply yelled with an expression of excitement, “He returned from Devilfall Valley alive? How is that possible?!”

All of those that heard the story felt their breathes turn cold. For a moment, they were both shocked by this information and were pondering the validity of these claims. For a time, they couldn’t help but glance at each other in dismay.

The tanned cultivator pondered for a moment before asking with a sneer, “Even if this matter was true, what does it have to do with the Moulan Plains? Don’t tell me that Master Cang Kun buried the treasures he acquired from Devilfall Valley inside this hidden cave residence?”

Marquis Nanlong twirled his beard and expressionlessly said, “Fellow Daoist Bing’s words are mostly correct. According to what was left behind at Master Qian Kun’s place of death, he stayed at Devilfall Valley for several years, but not long after, he met death in meditation. He possibly relapsed from his old injuries or acquired new injuries from Devilfall Valley, but either way, he should’ve brought many treasures out from Devilfall Valley. Treasures that caught the fancy of the greatest vagrant cultivator of that era is no small matter. Furthermore, from his capabilities to suppress crowds of cultivators as a vagrant cultivator, he must’ve possessed extraordinary secret arts and magic treasures. Are you still be unwilling to head into the Moulan Plains?”

The white-clothed old man calmly added, “As a group of many Nascent Soul cultivators, common spell warriors will not be able to block us. Moreover, if the worst occurs, we will simply break through their enclosures separately. If you are unwilling to risk

this amount of danger, please do not force yourselves to join. We will find others to go instead.”

Once that was said, the other cultivators began to wear expressions of hesitations. Han Li suddenly said, “There is something that puzzles me. Since you two know where the treasure is, why have you sought us out in particular, those with particularly strong spiritual senses? Could it be related to how well hidden the cave residence is?”

Marquis Nanlong revealed a helpless expression and said, “I was just about to explain that in a moment. If we could acquire the treasure by ourselves, we’d be able to monopolize the treasure. However, we were able to find the cave residence after much searching when the two of us snuck off to the Moulan Plains.

Unfortunately, the cave residence is surrounded by a marvelous ancient spell formation. Despite our best efforts we were unable to break through it. Of course, we didn’t dare to longer too long as we were still in the Moulan Plains. We commit the spell formation’s characteristics to memory and return to the Heavenly South. After searching through various records on spell formations, we eventually discovered the ancient spell formation was long lost ‘Wondrous Soul Restriction’.”

Wang Tiangu revealed amazement, “Wondrous Soul Restriction! Is that not one of the ten great ancient restrictions? How could it be there?”

A majority of cultivators hadn’t heard of the spell formation before, but their hearts trembled upon hearing the Ghost Spirit Sect Master. Anything from the ten great ancient restrictions would absolutely be difficult to dissolve.

A trace of astonishment flickered from Han Li’s eyes, but it soon disappeared.

The Marquis was somewhat surprised that Wang Tiangu knew of this. After exchanging a glance with the white-clothed old man, he

smiled and offered a word of praise, “I had already heard of Brother Wang’s grand reputation as a master of formation spells. To know of such an obscure ancient formation, I see that his reputation was well deserved.”

Wang Tiangu seemed to realize something and politely declined to speak, “Brother Nanlong, please continue. I’ve only heard of its name and know nothing of how to dissolve it. The matter is completely unfamiliar to me.”

When the white-clothed old man saw this, he gave a rare smile and he directly said, “We spent several years after our discovery researching the method of breaking through the restriction. We either had to whittle it away with brute force or find eight cultivators with powerful spiritual sense capable of manifested spiritual sense to dissolve the restriction.

Forcefully breaking through the restriction definitely wouldn’t do. Ancient restrictions were extraordinarily profound. Even if we were to violently attack the formation without end for several months, it may not be enough to break it. Of course, there would be no way we would so boldly display such actions inside the Moulan Plains! If we were to dissolve it with manifested spiritual sense, it would only take a day to breakthrough so long as all of your abilities are sufficiently powerful.”

The cultivators in the hall now understood why they were all called together.

Perhaps other mid Nascent Soul cultivators would possess stronger spiritual sense and be more suitable for breaking the restrictions, but the two clearly didn’t wish for other powerful cultivators to join them in fear that they would be betrayed. After all, while two mid Nascent Soul cultivators might not be able to win against the early Nascent Soul cultivators, they would be able to force a stalemate, if just barely.

Regardless, all of the cultivators present in the hall each felt

rather excited at the thoughts of treasures from Devilfall Valley.

Although it would be dangerous to enter the edge of the Moulan Plains, the danger was insignificant in comparison to what there was to be gained. This was an opportunity that was seldom seen but often sought.

Marquis Nanlong confirmed their participation and revealed a genuine smile upon seeing that no one had backed down.

“There is still something I must make clear to you all. If we are successful and are able to truly enter the cave residence, Brother Yun and I will have first pick. Then we will split the remaining treasures evenly. Any objections?”

Chapter 688: Danger in the Wildlands

The others didn't find it strange for Marquis Nanlong and the white-clothed old man surnamed Yun to have first pick. Since they were both the founders of this expedition and had the deepest cultivation, it was natural for them to have a larger share of the treasure.

In order to prevent any unexpected matters from occurring, the group immediately agreed to the plan. The group would set off in two days, before the end of the trade fair. After taking a heart demon oath to not divulge this information, the meeting was concluded.

Han Li noticed that the Marquis and the old man surnamed Yun appeared rather confident as if they weren't fearful that the early Nascent Soul cultivators would perform any petty tricks. Considering the location and method to break the spell restrictions were only known to them in addition to their shrewdness and abilities, it was likely that the others wouldn't think of any dirty schemes.

Of course, Han Li also agreed with this reasoning.

Ever since Han Li reached Nascent Soul stage, his cultivation for the Azure Essence Sword Arts was excruciatingly slow due to a lack of suitable medicine pills. Han Li reckoned that if he were to bitterly cultivate for three hundred years, he still wouldn't reach the peak of early Nascent Soul stage.

As for whether or not he would be able to reach mid Nascent Soul stage, that would simply be a matter of luck, not aptitude. Nascent Soul cultivators that managed to reach this far were all people with exceptional aptitude.

According to Han Li's original plans, he would've diligently cultivated for over a hundred years once the trade fair concluded. Once he made some progress with his cultivation art, he would

immediately leave his cave residence and find a few ancient cultivator ruins or some land rich with natural treasures. It was only like this he would find an opportunity to progress to the next stage of cultivation. But now that Han Li had heard of the treasures of the renowned Devilfall Valley, Han Li couldn't possibly let them go. This was perhaps the opportunity he needed.

The others likely shared the same thoughts.

These old Nascent Soul eccentrics were stuck at early Nascent Soul stage for countless years. There was no possibility they would renounce such an opportune breakthrough. The techniques and medicine pills were certain to be significant.

Of course, since the Ghost Spirit Sect's young master was travelling with them, if there was an opportunity to kill him on the way, Han Li wouldn't hold himself back. Even if Wang Tiangu witnessed it, what would change? The Devil Dao and the Heavenly Dao Alliance were already enemies.

As killing intent filled Han Li's mind, he walked down the azure stone road back to his own residence.

But unbeknownst to him, Wang Tiangu was calmly walking down an alley several streets away with Wang Chan and Yan Ruyan silently following after him.

"Once we return, clearly explain any grudges that are held between the two of you. It seems this person has yet to release his hatred towards you. In the future, you both must not stray too far from my side in order to prevent any ambushes."

Wang Chan respectfully replied, "Yes, Second Uncle. I didn't think that from an ill considered action from the past, this nephew would create such a large enemy for you. In such a short amount of time, he was able to breakthrough the bottlenecks of both Core Formation and Nascent Soul stage. It was far beyond what I could've predicted." He seemed to grow depressed at the thought of Han Li having already condensed a Nascent Soul.

Wang Tiangu coldly smiled, “Humph! There is no need for you to be so discouraged. With the Blood Spirit Arts’ supreme might, there is no need to fear that youngster when the two of you join hands. So long as you breakthrough to the seventh layer of the cultivation art, you and Ruyan will be able to condense a Nascent Soul together. It will be hard to say who will be troubled then! However, you two had best be careful on this trip to the Moulan Plains. Even if I am truly busy and cannot stay by your side, you two must stay together. With your combined strength, you will definitely be able to defend yourselves.”

“Many thanks for Second Uncle’s advice!” Wang Chan was greatly relieved by his uncle’s words and felt much more at ease.

“Hehe! Of your brothers, I think highest of you. Otherwise, I wouldn’t have brought you to this trade fair alone. However, that cultivator was originally a Yellow Maple Valley cultivator. The old ghost Linghu also personally made a trip to this trade fair. Could they have a connection with each other?” Wang Tiangu muttered to himself. His voice lowered as if he felt trepidation towards the Yellow Maple Valley Ancestor.

Wang Chan and Yan Ruyan looked at each other in bewilderment.

When Han Li returned to his residence, he slept for the night and spent the entirety of the next day hurriedly purchasing the materials he required. Afterwards, he repeatedly warned Mu Peiling to be careful and particularly requested Lu Luo to accompany her.

When Lu Luo heard that Han Li was about to hastily leave before the end of the trade fair, he felt amazed. However, he didn’t ask for a detailed explanation. He agreed in a single breath, leaving Han Li with a rather favorable impression towards him.

For the remainder of the day, Han Li spent his time at his residence in meditation.

It was only when the appointed time had drew near that Han Li departed from the pavilion and set off to a small mountain five hundred kilometers south of Soaring Skies City.

Six hours later, he and the others had all arrived. The three from the Ghost Spirit Sect were the last to arrive.

When Han Li saw this, he felt his heart stir.

As soon as Marquis Nanlong said, “We go!”, the group of nine silently departed south towards the Moulan Plains.

The State of Yu was the country of the Nine Nations Union closest to the Moulan Plains, but there wasn't truly a border between them. There was five thousand kilometers of desert wilderness separating the two. This area had very little vegetation and clouds of yellow sand eternally blowing through the air. It was the battlefield where the Nine Nations Union and the Moulan spell warriors fought. It was unknown how many cultivators had died in this barren wasteland.

Even when official battles weren't taking place, the wasteland were exceptionally dangerous. There were many other reasons why cultivators on both sides ended up wandering the desert.

There were those that were brazenly killing one another for their treasures. There were those that were fighting on the frontlines in order to breakthrough their cultivation bottlenecks. Regardless of their reasons, they all shared something in common: they all had the confidence that they would be able to prevail over cultivators of similar grade. Most of these cultivators were at Foundation Establishment stage with a few Core Formation cultivators mixed among them.

Each time a Core Formation cultivator appeared, the lower grade cultivators immediately kept their distance in fear that they would be caught in the crossfire.

As for Nascent Soul grade cultivators, they wouldn't easily make

an appearance in a small scale battle such as this one. That was why the Marquis' group weren't particularly vigilant when crossing through this area.

The distance of five thousand kilometers was something that was easily traversed in less than a day for a Nascent Soul cultivator. That was why the cultivators traveled at a relaxed pace. With Marquis Nanlong and the white-clothed old man leading the way, the rest of the party followed after them in a scattered manner.

They had passed by many low-grade cultivators along the way, completely unnoticed.

However, just as the party flew out for an hour, the white-clothed old man suddenly stopped.

Marquis Nanlong asked with surprise, "Brother Yun, what happened?" He had been taking turns with the white-clothed old man to keep a lookout with their spiritual sense.

The old man surnamed Yun narrowed his eyes and solemnly said, "There is a huge gale ahead of us. It is suspicious."

"A huge gale? What do you mean? Isn't a bit of wind normal?" Marquis Nanlong bafflingly asked. He then released his spiritual sense and probed the distance ahead of them.

Han Li and the others had clearly heard their words. After clearly hearing them, the party glanced at each other and released their own spiritual senses.

Although they had yet to truly enter the Moulan Plains, it was better to be careful. As they were all individuals with powerful spiritual senses, they may as well probe the situation themselves instead of relying on the word of another. As a result, each of them wore a bewildered expression.

The old woman sullenly said, "That wind isn't merely suspicious. There is certainly something wrong with it. Such a gale cannot naturally occur."

Chapter 689: The Appearance of Spell Warriors

Han Li's spiritual sense discovered that there was a yellow gale surging across the horizon. It was over three hundred meters tall and carried both stone and sand. It was truly malevolent as if an evil dragon had sprung from the earth.

But since his spiritual sense was nearly on par with late Nascent Soul cultivators, he was able to extend his spiritual sense past the fifty kilometer range of the other cultivators. With the Great Development Technique circulating through his body, his spiritual sense condensed and entered the sandstorm.

However, his spiritual sense grew dim after entering the sandstorm. He was only able to immerse his spiritual sense three hundred meters into the storm, but he was unable to see anything.

Marquis Nanlong grimaced and said, "Impressive. This should be the Moulan's Wind Spirit Technique! When I had fought against a spell warrior in the past, they had used this world enveloping spirit technique. Once it is deployed, it is capable of block any probing and its violent sandstorm is capable of self protection and trapping enemies. It is truly troublesome. However, I've never seen it at such an astonishing scale. It seems thousands of times greater in scope. Strange."

"A Moulan spirit technique?" The others' expressions changed upon hearing him.

Wang Chan and Yan Ruyan both paled upon hearing this. But since they had the weakest cultivation in the party, they didn't dare to speak out of place.

The white-clothed old man solemnly said, "Brother Nanlong speaks true. Only spirit techniques are able to create such astonishing sandstorms. Moreover, from the might of the spirit

technique, there are certain to be many spell warriors contained within it. We will not be able to breakthrough them with the strength of our current party.”

The old woman bewilderedly asked, “How is that possible? Why has the Moulan suddenly dispatched so many spell warriors?”

“Lady Tai, when was the last time we had ceasefire with the Moulan?” Wang Tiangu asked with an odd expression.

“It should’ve been about a hundred years ago. Does Brother Wang mean...” The old woman seemed to suddenly realize something.

Wang Tiangu wryly smiled and insipidly said, “About a hundred years ago... That should’ve been enough time for the Moulan to gather their strength.”

Marquis Nanlong wore an expression of helplessness and softly said, “Brother Wang speaks true. It should be time for the start of another war. Who knows how many cultivators will fall this time. But as chance would have it, we’ve run into the Moulan vanguard.”

The white-clothed old man sullenly said, “There are truly too many coincidences in this world, so this matter isn’t too shocking. However, we only have two options. We can return and avoid our encounter with the Moulan vanguard, biding our time for a more opportune moment to look for the treasure. After all, the treasure won’t be going anywhere, but the Moulan assault will certainly last for many years. We will not be able to return to the treasure in a short amount of time. Additionally, the world is constantly changing. It will be difficult to gather everyone once more after so much time had passed.”

The old woman shook her head and said, “There is no need to even consider it. We should definitely take the second option and break through the winds. However, the risk is truly too great. If there are only fearsome old ghosts lying within the sandstorm. It

would be difficult for us to succeed. Could it be that there is no way of avoiding them?

The old man muttered to himself for a moment before solemnly saying, "I fear it is too late. If the Moulan fully commit to their attack, it won't just be a vanguard. Even if we go around, we will still encounter them. But if it is just a matter of retaining our concealment as we enter, it shouldn't be a problem if we sneak past their sides. So long as we get past the Moulan vanguard, we will be able to evade the main force of spell warriors with enough time. Then we will be able to do as we please in the defenseless Moulan Plains and allow us to make off with the treasure without any worries."

The others discussed the old man's proposal and felt that it was the only option. After all, it would take many more years before this opportunity arose once more if it were given up now. Of course, retreat couldn't even be considered if they weren't Nascent Soul cultivators. Their lifespans wouldn't have been able to endure the wait.

Of course, before heading into the Moulan Plains, they each sent letter talismans to the closest Nine Nations Union stronghold to prevent them from being caught unprepared for the upcoming Moulan attack. This was considered something of an obligation given that they were cultivators of the Heavenly South.

Afterwards, the party of nine restrained their aura and concealed themselves as they stealthily flew off to the side, wishing to avoid the center of the sandstorm where the winds blew the most fierce.

Because Wang Chang and Yan Ruyan possessed weaker cultivation, Wang Tiangu had paid them particular consideration and covered them in a huge light barrier. A moment later, they disappeared from Han Li's sight.

But when Han Li saw this, he sneered. With his spiritual sense, Wang Tiangu and his juniors couldn't possibly escape his notice.

The dense sandstorm closed the fifty kilometer gap in an instant. It carried a faint pressure similar to that of demons. Before the sandstorm had arrived, tornados began to cut through the earth as they led the way. Fortunately, they had kept their distance from the center and were able to avoid the tornados as they swept past them.

The larger tornadoes were over a thirty meters wide and while the smaller ones were only about ten meters wide. They each seemed to contain several spell warriors.

Han Li remained hidden in close proximity to them and was able to clearly sense them with his spiritual sense. The blurred, vague silhouettes within the tornadoes hadn't discovered Han Li and company. They simply continued on their way.

Under the cold gaze of Han Li and company, they watched the spell warriors quietly go on their way.

Closely following after the tornadoes was the tremendous sandstorm. Standing at the very front, Marquis Nanlong's expression changed as he warned the party with a voice transmission, "Not good! Be careful at the side!"

When Han Li heard this, his face revealed alarm.

A huge tornado that was about three hundred meters wide and unfathomably tall was tearing towards them from a distance. Such a huge tornado was certain to be controlled by many spell warriors. Could it be that someone had discovered them?

Han Li took a deep breath and couldn't help but awaken his Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords. Although he had long heard of the grand reputation of spell warriors, he had never personally witnessed their might. However, he couldn't bring himself to look forwards to this under the current circumstances.

The others were glancing at the huge tornado with vigilant expression. There were those that had hands glowing with faint

light and those that had already prepared their magic treasures.

However, the huge tornado had swept close by them as if they hadn't detected them, much to the relief of Marquis Nanlong and the rest of the party.

After a short delay, the vast sandstorm immersed all of them and their surroundings became dense with dark yellow. It was a rather stifling atmosphere.

Marquis Nanlong calmly shouted, "Be on guard. This sandstorm is strange. Do not release your spiritual sense and don't stray too far either."

Although the party members were able to easily disperse of the sand, it would reveal their movements. Fortunately, the yellow sand quickly blew past them quickly, providing them the cover they needed to carefully move forward close together.

However, after the time it took to finish a meal, Han Li felt that there was something amiss as he monotonously swept his gaze around.

Suddenly, Han Li blurred and he reappeared floating in the air.

Han Li's sudden actions came as a shock to the rest of the party.

The old woman frowned and annoyedly asked, "Fellow Daoist Han, why did you stop?"

Han Li expressionlessly said, "Don't you feel that something is amiss?"

"What do you mean?" The tan man blurred and he reappeared at Han Li's side.

When Wang Tiangu and the white-clothed old man heard this, they glanced at each other for a moment before revealing an expression of bewilderment.

With an unsightly expression, Han Li said, "You Fellow Daoists should've been able to sense it without having me to say it. How is

it that we've been in this sandstorm for so long and we've yet to encounter even a single spell warrior? Don't tell me that the spell warriors have all gathered at the center of the sandstorm. Our surroundings have yet to change as well! You should all know what this means!"

The tan man wore an unsightly expression and muttered, "There is someone that secretly used a restriction against us." His eyes brightly glinted as he swept past his surroundings.

After a moment of silence, Marquis Nanlong nodded his head and sullenly said, "Fellow Daoist Han should be telling the truth. I also feel that something is strange. It seems we've been truly detected and they've used a technique to deal with it. A fight is unavoidable!"

Chapter 690: Grand Sage

The other cultivators remained calm after hearing this. Each of them realized that spell restrictions were used to trap them because the enemy lacked the forces to engage them. However, they couldn't remain trapped for too long, else the Moulan's reinforcements would arrive.

The Nascent Soul cultivators each began to flicker with light, making full use of their abilities as they began to strike the restrictions surrounding them. As Han Li remained in the air, he waved his arm in passing, releasing three streaks of azure light from his hand. An instant later, the three streaks of azure light flew off into the distant winds of sand.

Rippling fluctuations began to appear under their strikes. In a flicker of yellow light, the restrictions began to tear as if they were made of thin paper.

The others were shocked at how easy this was. When Han Li saw this, his expression greatly changed and he hurriedly flew forward through the gap that opened. It was quite ordinary for a hastily placed restriction to be easily struck down. There was no need for hesitation.

Han Li's blunt and sudden actions had shocked the others. But they immediately understood and closely followed after him.

Once they escaped, they still found themselves in winds filled with sand, but the stifling sensation of the restriction could no longer be felt. Han Li felt some relief from this and swept his spiritual sense around, wishing to regain his bearings before taking further action.

But at that moment, Han Li's expression stirred and his eyes narrowed. As he motionlessly floated in the air, he stared off into a certain direction of the sand. His eyes pulsed with faint blue light in a demonic display. A moment later, his expression returned to

normal.

As Marquis Nanlong caught up to Han Li, he noticed that Han Li was motionless. He bewilderedly swept his spiritual sense in the direction that Han Li was looking, and he discovered nothing strange. He bafflingly asked, "Fellow Daoist Han, what are you doing?"

Han Li turned his head towards the Marquis and calmly said, "Nothing, I was only pondering. Which direction should we go?"

"It is hard to make use of our spiritual sense in this cursed sandstorm, and the naked eye is hardly any better for making a decision. But just as it so happens, I have a star alignment treasure that is suitable for the situation." Initially scoffing at being asked, Marquis Nanlong reached to his waist and took out a faint red jade disk.

With the one hand holding at the jade disk, he formed an incantation gesture with the other. After muttering a cryptic incantation, he opened the hand with the incantation gesture and a golden light shot out from his palm, striking on of the talisman characters on the disk. The disk then began to shine with a weird red-gold light.

Han Li's heart stirred and he took another glance at the magic treasure. There was marvelous designs made of golden starlight that shined from the plate that seemed to signify stars, the sun and moon, as well as other astrological symbols.

Han Li was entranced by the sight of it. The others also crowded around with curious expressions.

Marquis Nanlong wasn't bothered by this and merely concentrated on the patterns shining on the jade disk. A short moment later, he put away the treasure with a flip of his hand and briefly said, "Follow me!" He then enveloped himself in a ball of golden light and shot off.

The rest of the party wordlessly followed after him. They were clearly confident in the Marquis' judgement.

In a flash of black light, Wang Tiangu enveloped Wang Chan and Yan Ruyan and brought them along. However, when he passed by Han Li, the Ghost Spirit Sect elder seemed to faintly glance at him before calmly brushing past him.

Han Li returned the glance with a mysterious smile. He faintly saw that Wang Chan had lowered his head and didn't dare to look in his direction in a rather meek fashion. On the contrary, the beautiful Yan Ruyan calmly turned her gaze towards Han Li for a short while with bright eyes before turning away.

Han Li soon found himself at the rear of the group. But with a careless smile, his body flashed with azure light as if about to set flight. But before that, he unconsciously turned his gaze to where he glanced previously and wore an odd expression. He then coldly chuckled and flew off.

In that instant, Han Li's figure disappeared into the sandstorm.

A short moment after Han Li disappeared, a flash of blinding yellow light shined from where he had been looking at. A huge dark hole that suddenly appeared from the ground where a huge shiny black insect had crawled out of.

This demon insect was astonishingly large and was about twenty meters long and twelve meters wide. Its body was in the shape of a disk. But what was most frightening about it was the dozens of dark yellow compound eyes spread on its head. There were also several slender horns on its head along with a pair of massive, incisive fangs that coldly glinted. There were also four transparent wings on its back that were gently fluttering.

Standing on top of this dreadful demon insect were three silhouettes of varying heights. One of them shined with blinding white light and another was enveloped in a strange dark green mist, obscuring his true form. As for the last figure, their body

flickered with faint blue lightning as if they were a materialized god of lightning.

“Grand Sage, are we just going to allow them to leave? Is this not bad?” The silhouette covered in white light glanced in the direction that Han Li’s party disappeared in. His words carried a faint trace of worry.

The green mist figure coldly snorted and icily said, “How could an illusion formation possibly constrain them? Don’t forget that they are mostly Nascent Soul stage cultivators, characters at the same grade as us. Even the weakest two are still late Core Formation cultivators. It is delusional to think that our Yellow Sand Tribe could hope to restrain them.” His temperament seemed harsh.

“But how will we deal with the Heavenly Wind Tribe’s Sage Mu? He was the one who personally sent a message to have us block the group of cultivators to our greatest ability. The vanguard is under his tribe’s command for the time being. He should’ve already sent orders to gather the Grand Sages from the other tribes. Would it be better for us to unleash our tribe’s holy protection artifact, the Devilearth Banner? Even if we can’t cause the Nascent Soul cultivators much harm, it should be possible to trap them for the time being.” The white light silhouette raised the proposal with an anxious tone.

The green mist figure grew furious and bluntly rebuked, “Nonsense! How can we so casually use the thirty six Devilearth Banners? The ancestors of our Yellow Sand Tribe have always instructed us to never use the sacred banner unless our tribe is on the verge of extermination. And even if these cultivators were trapped for a time, given their abilities, they would certainly destroy a few of the banners. How would we respond then? Without the sacred tribe protecting artifacts, how could we steadily maintain our position in the ten great tribes? There may be even a few smaller tribes that may pry into the matter and

exterminate us.”

“I was careless! Many thanks for Grand Sage’s reminder.” The spell warrior within the white light hastily apologized for his offence.

“Since you’ve only recently become a Sage, this fault will be forgiven just this once! In any case, it’s not as if we did nothing. They were simply too powerful and we were incapable of restraining them. Grand Sage Mu sure had a good idea to send our Yellow Sand Tribe to tie the intruders down. Once both sides suffered, he’d conveniently arrive to finish them off and take the lion’s share of the credit and loot. On the other hand, if we don’t take out our tribe protecting artifacts to block them, we will be seen as harboring malicious intentions, leaving an opportunity for them to enact reprisals!” The Grand Sage in the green mist coldly spoke as if he had an extremely poor opinion of the Sage Mu.

The Moulan spell warrior shrouded in lightning calmly said, “I fear this is how Sage Mu intends to act. After all, our two tribes never did have a good relationship. However, we are now allied armies and aren’t truly subordinate to them. Our loss of strength isn’t truly something they will take to heart. Moreover, the Heavenly Wind Tribe’s Wind Riding Chariot is extremely fast. It should be able to overtake the intruders. Hehe, it will be hard to say who will end up victorious! But so long as they managed to buy enough time for the main force to arrive, the Heavenly Wind Tribe will be the victors.”

The Grand Sage in the green mist disagreed, “Although the Wind Riding Chariot is extremely fast, by the time enough people are gathered together to use it, it will perhaps be too late.”

After a moment of thought, the Grand Sage muttered, “Whether or not those cultivators are caught is no concern of ours. But I am puzzled about the youth that managed to first breakthrough the formation. It seemed he discovered where our concealed hole was. How baffling. The Xumi Insect is an exotic insect from antiquity,

and although its combat power isn't great, it has the innate ability to temporarily tear a crevice in space. It is an expert in concealment. Although it is still immature and the amount of time it can maintain a spacial tear is limited, it was still enough to prevent the two mid Nascent Soul cultivators from discovering us. But unexpectedly, it wasn't enough to prevent this particular early Nascent Soul cultivator from discovering us. It seems that youth is an exceptional character. If it isn't due to a particular secret technique, then it must be from an exceptionally powerful probing treasure." A trace of bewilderment could be heard from the Grand Sage's voice.

Chapter 691: Wind Riding Chariot

Han Li followed after Marquis Nanlong and company, flying through the sandstorm for tens of kilometers. During this time, not one spell warrior had appeared before them. It was clear that a warning was given. Han Li then recalled what he had unintentionally discovered when he broke through the restriction.

It had been quite the coincidence. Because he was incapable of using his spiritual sense to see through the sandstorm, his only option was to channel spiritual power through his eyes and use the ability granted by the Brightsight Water. Since he had already used the Brightsight Spirit Water several times to cleanse his eyes, he may as well use this opportunity to test if it had any effect.

The results had greatly surprised him. His spirit sight was able to clearly see through the dense sandstorm, much to his delight. However, he was also astonished to see a circular shadow within the sandstorm that was forty meters away.

In his shock, the spiritual power faded away from his eyes and the shadow could no longer be seen. His naked eyes could now only see the sandstorm.

He channeled his spirit sight once more and the shadow appeared once more in its original position. But this time, Han Li channeled even more spiritual power into his eyes. He was able to see the shadow slightly more distinctly and he could see silhouettes faintly swaying inside.

Even after pouring in additional spiritual power, this was the limit of what he could see. But still, it was enough for him to clearly see through their nearby concealment. Although he didn't know what amazing ability was being used, only spell warriors would be capable of concealing themselves from Nascent Soul warriors in these parts.

It seemed the enemy also knew that their party was quite

powerful and didn't wish to fight to the bitter end, instead opting to keep watch on them. As such, Han Li didn't reveal their location and left in feigned ignorance. Since these people weren't brave to begin with, they wouldn't obstruct him later on.

Once Han Li's party left the yellow sandstorm, they immediately flew off in bursts of light and tore through the skies at their top speed. Although they had managed to shake off the spell warrior vanguard, their main force would soon be arriving. If they didn't make it out of the sandy wasteland, their lives would be put at risk.

Not only would there be high grade cultivators from the main army to match them, but there would also be countless spell warriors wearing them down. Therefore, Marquis Nanlong and the others were all wordlessly flying as quickly as possible.

With their deep cultivation and fantastical speed, they were able to spot a faint trace of green off the horizon in less than half a day of flight. They had finally reached the edge of the Moulan Plains.

Marquis Nanlong let out a long sigh and smiled, "Good. We can finally relax. We've managed to make it through without any mishap."

He slowed his speed. After such a long period of prolonged high-speed flight, they had consumed large quantities of magic power. Even if he could manage to bear through it, the others certainly wouldn't fare any better.

The tan cultivator sighed with relief, "Yes, since we've managed to reach so far without any mishap, they shouldn't be able to catch us no matter how desperate they may be."

"Don't lower your guard! There are formidable characters amongst the spell warriors, who possess unfathomable abilities. We... Yi!" The white-haired old man cut off his own words with a yelp and he suspiciously glanced behind him.

Han Li felt his heart thump. Just as he was about to ask the old

man a question, he faintly heard a piercing crack from behind them.

In an instant, the odd sound grew louder, attracting the attention of everyone in the party.

They saw white light flickering on the horizon behind them. There was a small sphere of light that was speeding towards them with unconceivable speed.

The white-clothed old man recognized what it was at a glance and wore an expression of furious alarm. “Not good! That’s the spell warriors’ Wind Riding Chariot. They wouldn’t dare to chase us unless that had a similar number of Nascent Soul grade spell warriors.”

After sweeping his spiritual sense past them, Wang Tiangu gloomily said, “There are five Nascent Soul stage spell warriors sitting inside it. It seems they don’t wish to defeat us, but to tangle us down and stall for reinforcements.”

“We cannot allow them to tie us down. We won’t be able to defeat five spell warriors in a short amount of time. Additionally, they will act together to prevent us from escaping. Scatter and use your own abilities to escape them. Here are some jade slips. Each person will take one and remember the area. In three days time, we will gather there once again.” Once Marquis Nanlong finished speaking, he immediately took out a few identical jade talisman and tossed them to each person. In that moment of delay, the crackling from the distant wind chariot became clearer.

“Fellow Daoists, take care of yourselves. I will see you once more in three days time.” Marquis Nanlong then enveloped his body in golden light and shot off without delay.

The white-clothed old man sullenly transformed into a streak of white light, and flew off in a different direction from the Marquis. As for the others, they received the jade slip and each began to scatter without delaying, making use of their own secret

techniques to flee.

The tan cultivator emitted meter tall, yellow flames from his body and directly disappeared into the earth. It seemed he was making use of an earth movement technique.

The old woman's hand flashed with silver light and she summoned a silver crane hairpin. After breathing out a mist of spiritual Qi onto the treasure, a cloud of white crane feathers began to surround her. In a blur, the old woman unsteadily stood on top of a crane. Then with a long shriek, the white crane took off into the skies with the old woman still on its back.

As for the stern-faced cultivator, his entire body glowed with silver light. He formed an incantation gesture with his hands and merged with an unknown treasure, transforming into a silver flood dragon before disappearing into the clouds.

Wang Tiangu, Wang Chan, and Yan Ruyan used some unknown secret Ghost Spirit Sect technique and flew off together into a broad streak of black light. They traveled at an incredibly fast speed. In only a moment, they already became a black speck in the sky.

Han Li was also quick to act. At nearly the same time he caught the Marquis' jade slip, his body began to glow with red light. A crimson cloak suddenly appeared on his body.

After identifying his direction, he began to pour great amounts of spiritual power into the cloak. Then with a hum, it burst with crimson light, enveloping Han Li in a ball of light and launching him through the air. Travelling at the speed that rivalled the others, he still had the leisure to turn his head and glanced at the Wind Riding Chariot behind them.

Although there was still quite some distance between them, Han Li was able to clearly see it with his immense spiritual sense.

The chariot appeared truly strange. It was a completely white

chariot, but there was nothing that was pulling it. In place of its wheels, it had a pair of twenty meter long dark-red wooden wings. There were talisman characters floating on it and it glowed with a rainbow light. After examining it for a moment, he shockingly discovered that the exquisite white body of the chariot was made from the bones of an unknown beast. It carried a faintly vicious aura.

Due to the obstruction of the white light, Han Li could only vaguely make out the people sitting inside. And since he had never fought with a spell warrior before, Han Li wasn't about to rashly probe the Wind Riding Chariot. Instead, he turned his head forward and focused on controlling the crimson cape, flying directly towards the south of the Moulan Plains.

A short moment later, Han Li and the rest of the party were over five kilometers separated from one another. When the Wind Riding Chariot arrived where the party had slip up, Han Li couldn't help but take another look at it.

The Wind Riding Chariot had stopped for the moment. In a flicker of white light, four different silhouettes left the chariot, three men and one woman. These four spell warriors gathered together and had a quick discussion before chasing four different Nascent Soul cultivators. Fortunately, none traveled in Han Li's direction.

Han Li grew relieved at the sight, but he then inwardly shouted, "Not good!"

At that same moment, the Wind Riding Chariot wildly pulsed with white light and fiercely shot in Han Li's direction, releasing sharp cracks that seem to bore into the mind. As Han Li flew in the crimson light, his expression grew unsightly.

Soon Han Li coldly snorted and his body began to emit blinding light and his speed grew faster. The crimson cloak began to also release low hums.

A white sphere of light began to chase after the red sphere of light in the sky with a distance of five kilometers between the two.

While the Wind Riding Chariot was astonishingly fast, Han Li's crimson cloak wasn't something to make light of. Both parties had found themselves at a deadlock for a time.

A short moment later, the two spheres of light disappeared from the edge of the plains as they flew deeper towards the heart of the Moulan Plains.

Chapter 692: A Measure of Skill

With the astonishing speed of both Han Li's crimson cloak and the Wind Riding Chariot, they deeply headed over fifty kilometers deep into the Moulan Plains.

As Han Li pushed the crimson cloak to even greater speeds, he used his spiritual sense to sweep behind him. Surprise appeared on his face.

He was already exercising the full might of the cloak, but not only was he unable to shake off the chariot, but it was actually able to close over half the distance between them. It was no wonder why that old man surnamed Yun had revealed shock when he saw the chariot despite being a mid Nascent Soul cultivator.

The Wind Riding Chariot was truly a top grade flight treasure. It seemed that unless he used lightning movement or Bloodshadow Evasion, he wouldn't be able to escape it.

But ever since Han Li formed a Nascent Soul, he had yet to fight against a cultivator of the same grade. Although he had confidence in his mystical treasures, he truly had no idea where he stood amongst Nascent Soul cultivators with regard to power.

Nascent Soul cultivators didn't take the measuring of their skill lightly. Even with the several years he stayed at the Drifting Cloud Sect, he had only discussed techniques with the two sect elders. He had yet to spar with them. And at Soaring Skies city, he merely had a contest of spiritual sense with Marquis Nanlong. It wasn't enough to gauge his true strength.

Now that the spell warrior in the Wind Riding Chariot was chasing him, he had a suitable opponent to measure his own skill. Furthermore, he was quite interested in the spirit techniques of spell warriors. If he was able to repel or even kill the other party, it would be an optimal result. But if that wasn't possible, he would be easy to use his Thunderstorm Wings to flee. Additionally, he

couldn't allow the fight to take up too much time since he was located inside the Moulan Plains.

Having quickly come to a decision, Han Li's body wildly flickered with crimson light. It immediately faded away to be replaced with a sudden eruption of azure light. At that same moment, he stopped and turned around.

He coldly glanced at the white light that was pursuing him and swept his sleeve, releasing a swarm of several tens of azure swordlights. With a series of dull cries, they formed a densely layered formation in a display of astonishing grandeur.

Since this was his first battle against a Nascent Soul cultivator, Han Li had no intention of being sloppy. In addition to his seventy-two Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords, he reached for his spirit beast pouch and tossed it into the air. A huge cloud of black-tained Gold Devouring Beetles appeared above him. With a quick incantation, they revolved once in the air before rushing towards him.

Han Li's eyes became spirited. He waved his arms and two spell seals struck the beetle swarm. The swarm suddenly enveloped him and covered Han Li, soon to form a tri-colored armor on his body. It possessed a shining simplicity and glowed with faint azure light.

Just as it so happened, the Wind Riding Chariot had arrived just as Han Li finished. The spell warrior inside the chariot witnessed the shocking scene of the insects turning into armor. The flying chariot slowed down, coming to a stop three hundred meters away from Han Li.

Han Li expressionlessly glanced at him and didn't pay him any heed. Instead, he took the opportunity to spread his hands and summon a flower basket in one hand and a small bell in the other.

Soon after, he wordlessly tossed the small bell in front of him. In a flash of silver light, the small bell instantly expanded to ten meters in width and shot towards the enemy in an overwhelming charge.

At that same moment, Han Li inwardly commanded the seventy-two flying sword to turn into three, forming two hundred sixteen azure swordlights. As soon as Han Li uttered the command, they loudly rang and converged with sparkles of light before surging towards the opponent in a three-hundred-meter long wave of azure light. It closely followed after the silver bell as if wishing to shatter the Wind Riding Chariot in a single strike.

The silver bell that was first released had already begun to display its might. It flew above the chariot and began to spin. With a series of continuous hums, faintly visible silver soundwaves began to ripple from the center of huge bell, enveloping the Wind Riding Chariot beneath it.

If the spell warrior didn't defend, Han Li was confident that the strike would cause great damage. While the silver bell hadn't undergone any changes, Han Li's vast increase in cultivation had increased its might several times greater than when he had used it during Core Formation stage.

Of course, the Wind Riding Chariot wasn't about to receive this strike. Its wooden wings slightly flapped and shot over thirty meters forward, dodging the soundwave that was about to envelope it.

The chariot glowed with vast white light, and a silhouette flew out and floated above it. At that moment, a huge azure wave of light was about to strike the chariot.

When the silhouette saw this, they calmly raised their hand. A barrier of deep blue light abruptly appeared from the top of the chariot. In the instant that the azure wave struck the barrier, an explosion sounded out. Although the strike had caused the light barrier to shake, it was ultimately unharmed.

Han Li's complexion changed as he gazed at the sight with narrow eyes.

At that moment, the spell warrior began to mutter and spat a

thin blue thread out from his mouth. In an instant, the thread transformed into a huge python as it threw itself out of the light barrier towards Han Li's wave of azure swordlight. In a clash of azure and blue light, the air began to rumble.

In that moment, the spell warrior raised their hand and struck the Wind Riding Chariot with a spell seal. The chariot quickly shrank and flew into the spell warrior's hand once it was the size of a palm. Once it was safely placed away in their storage pouch, they raised their head to glance at Han Li, revealing a gloomy, shriveled expression.

Han Li's eyes narrowed. This figure was an old man that was beyond the age of sixty. Odd azure tattoos laid on his cheeks and he wore oddly-styled blue embroidered robes. But what most shocked Han Li was the old man's immensely powerful spiritual Qi fluctuations. This old man was actually a spell warrior at the peak of early Nascent Soul stage, just on the verge of entering the next level. It was no wonder he was able to easily block both of his attacks.

Han Li had already discovered the the blue light barrier wasn't a technique. It was something that was released from a fist-sized pearl that was being held in the old man's hand. As for the strange blue python, he saw that it wasn't a treasure, but something that was entirely composed of spiritual power.

Han Li's heart grew more vigilant and his expression grew icy. The ancient flower basket treasure in his hand began to flicker with white light and was about to release.

When the old man saw that Han Li was about to continue the attack, his expression grew solemn and he shouted, "Cease! Although your esteemed self possesses vast ability, are you not being too impatient? I've yet to even speak and you've already attacked me." His voice seemed somewhat harsh.

Han Li frowned and coldly said, "What words are there to be said

between cultivators and spell warriors?” Nevertheless, he pointed to the silver bell and had it cease its attack. As for the flower basket in his hand, he withdrew his spiritual power from it and waited for what the spell warrior had to say.

The old man chuckled and nonchalantly said, “While your words hold some truth, at our cultivation there are times where a fight to the death is unnecessary. So long as you answer my questions to satisfaction, I can release you.”

Han Li glanced at the old man and sneered, “Answer? I have nothing to tell your esteemed self. How about you answer my questions instead?”

Han Li could already guess what the old man intended to ask. Anyone would be bewildered to see so many Nascent Soul cultivators appear in a single place.

“It seems Fellow Daoist is refusing my kind intentions!” The old man’s face grew sullen after hearing Han Li’s response.

Han Li snorted and suddenly pointed to the sky in front of him. The tangled and turbulent swordlight suddenly condensed towards its center and formed a huge sword that spanned a hundred meters. In several lightning fast strikes, the strange blue python was severed into pieces and the sword took advantage of the opportunity to chop down towards the old man through the light barrier with great force.

A fierce expression appeared on the old man’s face. With no further words, he raised his hand and the fist-sized pearl in his hand flew into the air. Soon after, he opened his mouth and spat a mist of pure Qi onto the pearl.

The pearl flickered with blue light and it quickly began to revolve. Lines of slim blue light began to revolve around the pearl, forming a huge blue net underneath the light barrier in the blink of an eye.

At that same moment, the old man quickly muttered something and grasped both of his hands in an incantation gesture. Blue light then began to surge from his body, forming a huge sphere of blue light above the old man.

As the huge sword descended, it clashed with the light barrier. To no surprise for Han Li, the huge sword condensed from over two hundred swordlights easily pierced through the light barrier.

With a huge burst of wind, the light barrier was cleaved into two and the sword moved on to strike the huge net underneath it.

Chapter 693: Ice Crystals and a Black Mountain

The following scene was somewhat against Han Li's expectations. The huge blue net sparkled with light and held firm against the huge sword's descent. The translucent, sparkling lines of the net appeared incredibly durable.

The huge sword fiercely chopped the net several times, but the net held firm. Under control of the old man, the net wrapped layers and layers of thread around the sword, trapping the sword in just a short moment. Although it was only loosely restrained, it would still be difficult to escape from in a short amount of time.

Han Li frowned. Just as he thought about what to do next, the old man seized the initiative.

With an icy expression, the old man held his hands in a strange wheel-shaped incantation gesture. Immediately after, streaks of various-colored spell seals began to shoot out from his hand towards the sphere of light above him.

The blue light sphere began to shrink and ruptured after the old man uttered a cryptic incantation. Countless slivers of palm-wide ice crystals began to appear around the old man. Twinkling with blue light, they occupied an area of thirty meters around him.

With a fierce glare, the old man boldly spread out his hands to Han Li and uttered a harsh command, "Go!" In that instant, the ice crystals launched themselves in a barrage and filled the skies with their wails. The dense wave converging onto Han Li's position made for a breathtaking sight.

'This is a spirit technique?'

Han Li wore an astonished expression, but his hands didn't stay still. He activated the flower basket and slapped the spirit beast pouch at his waist. A cloud of black-tainted Gold Devouring Beetles

wildly rushed forth and began to surround Han Li's body.

This time, the beetles didn't transform into an object. They merely revolved in place, creating an impenetrable barrier around Han Li and hiding him from view.

Once the flower basket left his hand, it transformed into a cloud of white mist and directly charged towards the barrage of ice crystals. It had managed to absorb a majority of the ice crystals into its folds upon contact.

As soon as this happened, the remaining ice crystals flew around the flower basket as if they were intelligent and converged towards Han Li once more.

In unbroken succession, the ice crystals were stopped by the beetle swarm for just a moment before piercing through inside. The insect barrier was restored to its original shape, but there was no sound coming from behind it as if it were completely dead.

Old Man Mu couldn't help but cry out in alarm after seeing this.

His 'Ice Crystal Technique' was similar to the cultivators' elemental Daoist technique, the Icerain Technique. However, it was greater in quantity and the ice blades were completely created from a profound ice Qi that he cultivated from within his body. Not only was it amazingly sharp, but it was also incredibly cold. Cultivators who were unaware of this would be incapable of dealing with the icy Qi it left behind after being shattered, given that they were able to protect themselves. However, his ice crystals completely disappeared with no sign of the icy Qi.

After a moment of hesitation, he thought to use his spiritual sense to peer inside the beetle barrier, but suddenly, he heard a loud noise from above him. He simply heard a ring from both his ears before he felt his consciousness dim. He had nearly fallen from the sky from being caught off guard.

In the old man's furious alarm, he hurriedly slapped his hands

together and fiercely patted his body several times before a white light barrier appeared around his body. He regained steady footing and turned his head to look above.

The huge silver bell had flown above him at an unknown time. He had suffered a direct attack from it just a moment ago. At that moment, the bell sparkled with silver light and launched another sound attack. This time, the attack wasn't aimed at the old man. Instead, the sound waves were aimed at the huge blue net that was tangling with the huge azure sword.

"Not good!" The old man immediately recollected himself and hastily attempted to cast a technique to block the attack, but he was too late. The blue net was struck by the silver soundwaves and were shredded apart inch by inch, allowing the huge sword to break free of its bindings. The huge sword then cleaved towards the old man without any reservations.

But before the sword met its mark, it faced an immense pressure against it.

Although the old man was already covered in a layer of protection, he didn't dare to directly receive a strike from such an immense blade. With a pale face and swaying body, he summoned a blue light barrier that spanned a hundred meters around him.

Soon after, he beckoned to the blue orb in the air and the magic treasure immediately flew above him. After spitting a mist of pure Qi on it, another layer of light protected him. He then turned his glance to Han Li with a grave expression.

His complexion paled even further.

Han Li's beetle barrier had already scattered and it become a cloud that floated above him. He extended his hand and several inch-large azure ice flowers appeared in his hand. He was indifferently looking at the old man.

When the their gazes met, Han Li's icy gaze made the old man

inwardly tremble. However, his sights were soon focused on the small exquisite ice flowers in Han Li's grasp and he revealed great bewilderment.

Under the sunlight, the ice flowers brilliantly sparkled in a display of vast beauty, but that was far from the old man's mind. Having cultivated ice attribute spirit techniques for hundreds of years, he was able to feel an astonishingly cold spiritual power from the flowers despite their distance. Although it felt somewhat unfamiliar, the old man was filled with an unspeakable dread nonetheless.

In that instant, the old man curled his lips and wore an unsightly expression, "Did you use that to break through my spirit technique? Could you tell me about that treasure of yours?"

When Han Li heard this, he smiled and calmly said, "The treasure? Let's leave it for now. If you agree to tell me about that spirit technique of yours, I might say something about it."

"What? A cultivator like you is interested in the spell warrior spirit techniques? Isn't that strange?" The old man's astonishment was replaced with his originally gloomy expression.

But from the old man's wandering gaze, Han Li could faintly make out a trace of dread that he held towards the ice flowers. Han Li couldn't help but sneer.

When the old man saw Han Li's expression, he grew furious. With a cold snort, he slapped his storage pouch and he summoned an item in a flash of black light. It was pitch black and seemed to resemble a small mountain.

Han Li glanced with surprise. Before he could examine the object, the old man had already begun chanting an incantation. He shortly tossed the small mountain in the air and it shined with black light. In a mere instant, its size grew to a hundred meters in width and it only continued to expand.

When Han Li saw this, he felt his breath turn cold.

Han Li instinctively pointed to the huge azure sword. With a clear ring, it transformed into a streak and fiercely chopped down at the top of the small mountain.

With a huge rumble, the azure streak and the black light collided, releasing tumbling stones and magnificent light.

Han Li narrowed his eyes as he glanced at the scene. His sword had dug a thirty meter deep hole into the top of the black mountain. However, it was clear that it was still far from cleaving the mountain into two. Additionally, he was able to see the mountain closing the hole at a speed visible to the naked eye. Before he could muster a second strike, it had already restored most of the damage that was done.

The mountain had risen over three hundred meters tall within its black radiance. It appeared no different from a true mountain. Even as unwavering and composed as Han Li was, his expression grew unsightly at the sight of the black mountain that stood before him. There was without a doubt that if the mountain were to strike him, any beetle barrier or armor would not be able to save him. He would be flattened.

At that moment, Han Li's huge sword had already struck the huge mountain several times but to no effect.

The old man sinisterly chuckled and pointed at the mountain. With a rustle of wind, it appeared above Han Li and began to ruthlessly fall down.

In Han Li's alarm, he was unable to think any further. Rolls of thunder had already appeared from his back. In a flash of silver light, he disappeared without a trace. He appeared a hundred meters away with a pair of silver white wings on his back.

"Yi!" In the instance Han Li disappeared, the old man felt his heart drop.

The old man saw Han Li reappear at a different location. He gazed at Han Li with great caution; his expression filled with astonishment.

Having realized that Han Li was capable of instant movement, the old man knew that he would be unable to restrain Han Li and that his efforts were wasted.

After all, at his current cultivation he was only capable of moving the huge black mountain several times. Each use would greatly drain his magic power. He didn't dare to use it recklessly.

Chapter 694: Frozen Over

With great alarm lingering within, the old man thought to retreat. Han Li on the other hand glanced at the black mountain with a trace of awe.

Such a peculiar and astonishing treasure wasn't something that this old man was able to refine. It was most likely some ancient treasure that had remained from antiquity. Han Li was certain that this treasure's might wasn't something that even a late Nascent Soul cultivator couldn't endure.

So long as the strike landed, it could decide any battle in a single strike. With this item in hand, he would be able to solve his lacking attack power. Not to mention that he was also interested in the old man's Wind Riding Chariot.

With that in mind, Han Li's gaze shifted to the old man and his expression gradually grew hostile. A trace of killing intent could be seen deep within his eyes.

Although he hadn't fought much with the old man, Han Li was confident that he understood most of his techniques. It seemed to be the old man's misfortune that he was specialized in ice attribute techniques.

With the Celestial Ice Flames, they wouldn't pose much of a threat against Han Li. Despite the vast number of ice crystals that had attacked him, he was able to easily dissolve them with the Celestial Ice Flames.

This teleporting black mountain should be the old man's most powerful treasure. However, with the instantaneous movements of the Thunderstorm Wings, it is of no use against Han Li. In this case, it should be possible for Han Li to kill the old man.

Having come to a decision, Han Li no longer held any hesitation.

The ice flowers in his grasp trembled and flickered with blue

light, quickly transforming into an egg-sized flame. It hovered in his palm and emitted a bizarre aura.

At that same moment, Han Li pointed to the huge sword and the silver bell with his free hand. Soon after, he flapped his wings and disappeared, leaving only thunder in his wake. In the next moment, he reappeared three hundred meters away from the old man, with blue flames in his grasp.

The huge sword and the silver bell had flourished with radiance and shot towards the old man in brilliant streaks of light. Along the way, the huge sword suddenly dissolved into several hundred foot-long swordlights and filled the sky, surrounding the old man within a swarm of swords.

Azure light flickered without end as the swordlight began to fiercely pierce through the old man's light barrier. The bell unleashed waves and waves of silver soundwaves, shaking the old man's light barrier upon impact.

These attacks had greatly alarmed the old man, but he still kept a sound mind. In addition to pouring a large quantity of spiritual power into the pearl above him, strengthening the barrier around him, he also quickly formed a hand incantation. Blue light pulsed from his body and shed off from it.

After a quick rotation in the air, the light transformed into four, meter-long ice shields that rotated around him. They were small and exquisitely refined.

The old man felt more at ease with these ice shields protecting him. He immediately beckoned to the black mountain in the distance and it began to fly back towards him in a streak of black light. As this happened, he continuously glanced around him in fear that Han Li would launch a sudden attack on him. As expected of a Nascent Soul stage spell warrior, he possessed much combat experience.

With another burst of thunder, Han Li appeared about forty

meters away from the old man in a flash of lightning. A dense barrage of incisive, azure threads suddenly shot out from his hand - a display of the [Nightazure Needles treasure talisman](#).

At such a short distance, the old man was unable to respond in time. The myriads of azure threads pierced through the blue light barrier and directly struck the ice shields.

Sounds of cracking ice filled the air as the azure threads struck the ice shields. In a brilliant flash of white light, the needles became covered in dense, glistening ice and began to fall to the ground.

When the old man saw this, his alarm soon turned to joy. With a chuckle, he opened his mouth and shot a beam of blue light directly towards the nearby Han Li. In response, Han Li disappeared from sight in a flash of silver light.

In that moment of delay, the black mountain flew above the old man. Its towering figure made for an astonishing sight.

Without any hesitation, the old man struck the mountain with a spell seal. The mountain then began to tremble and released a large glow of black light from its bottom. With the old man at its center, the mountain enveloped the several hundred azure swordlights and the huge silver bell within its light.

These treasures immediately began to swivel and shake in an attempt to break free, but their power was greatly weakened. The swaying light barrier had returned to normal once more.

When the old man saw this, he felt greatly relieved.

Soon after, he flipped his hand. The Wind Riding Chariot reappeared in his palm with a flash of white light. He lightly tossed it into the air and it began to expand to its original size. A short moment later, it was successfully restored and flew off to the side.

For some unknown reason, the old man felt a sense of dread ever since Han Li transformed the ice flowers in his palm into small

blue flames. With the additional appearance of Han Li's Thunderstorm Wings, he felt that matters had turned for the worse and decided to flee, rather than continue the fight.

Seeing that the Wind Riding Chariot had been successfully prepared, the old man immediately transformed into a streak of light. Several flashes later, he charged past the obstructed flying swords and towards the Wind Riding Chariot in nearly the blink of an eye.

When the light faded away, the old man was already safely located inside the Wind Riding Chariot. With relief in his heart, he thought to retrieve his pearl and the black mountain, when he suddenly heard thunder at his side.

In flash of light, Han Li suddenly appeared before him.

"Ah!" The old man loudly shouted and raised his hand, but it was too late. Han Li's arm was already shooting towards the old man like a bolt of lightning. The Celestial Ice Flames completely enveloped his hand.

The old man felt his heart sink, but the shields of ice floating around him automatically moved to protect him. In a flash of white light, they appeared in front of the old man just in time.

The old man felt a trace of joy after seeing this. Han Li had attacked his Crystal Ice Shields without any defenses. 'He was simply courting death! Surely in just a moment, his arm will be frozen through by the frigid Qi.'

With a muffled peng, white and blue light brightly shone.

The old man felt his heart drop by the sudden turn of events. The flame-clad hand was already pressing against his chest. It felt extremely soft to the touch.

Before the old man could even scream, the strange icy flames had quickly spread from Han Li's grasp, engulfing the old man in a single breath. In a short instant, Han Li saw a majority of the

man's body turn into a statue of ice.

With a fearful expression, the old man hurriedly summoned the core Yang flames that he spent several hundreds of years diligently cultivating. It wound around his neck and released a blinding white light, preventing the ice from spreading to his head. For a moment, the core flames were in a deadlock with the blue ice.

When Han Li saw this, he scoffed. He waved his free hand. A streak of azure sword Qi then appeared in the air and ruthlessly chopped towards the old man's head. A short moment later, the white light trembled and the blue frost quickly covered whatever remained of his head.

The severed half of the old man's face revealed despair, but soon, hostility filled his eyes. A clear sound rang from the top of his head. A Nascent Soul with the old man's face had manifested.

Han Li's expression grew sullen and he spat a bolt of lightning towards the Nascent Soul without any reservations.

However, the Nascent Soul immediately disappeared from sight in a pulse of blinding blue light. The bolt of lightning had missed.

When Han Li hurriedly glanced around, he saw that the Nascent Soul was already three hundred meters away. Without any hesitation, it disappeared once more in a flash of blue light.

At that moment, the blue pearl trembled for a moment before disappearing as well. The pearl then reappeared inside the Nascent Soul's grasp.

The Nascent Soul gazed at Han Li with a resentful expression before silently blurring out of sight. Not long after, it turned into a speck of light that flew towards the horizon. At that distance, it no longer used instant movement and simply tore through the skies with blue pearl in hand. Not long after, it could no longer be seen.

Han Li coldly glanced at the departing Nascent Soul and simply grabbed onto the old man's corpse without moving.

Although his Thunderstorm Wings were also capable of instant movement, the delay between each movement made it so that he was still too slow to catch up to him. Since it escaped his first blow, he allowed it to go free as there was no immediate need to kill it.

At that moment, the old man's Nascent Soul had already disappeared without a trace. Han Li expressionlessly shook his hand and caused the old man's frozen corpse to shatter, filling the sky with glossy blue dust.

Given to him by Layman Qing Yi in Heavenvoid Hall(chapter 468), this treasure talisman was only used once in his battle with Wen Tianren, the disciple of Archsaint Six Paths (Chapter 572).

Chapter 695: Gathering Together

Although he hadn't dealt with the opponent's Nascent Soul, the old man's body was destroyed. It should take decades before he could recover his vitality, let alone possess another body. Finding a suitable body should take quite some time. Even if he begrudgingly possessed an unsuitable corpse, his cultivation would greatly decrease.

As for the two ancient treasures and the storage pouch that were left behind, they were a great profit. Even if he didn't find Master Cang Kun's cave residence, this dangerous journey into the Moulan Plains would still turn a profit.

With that thought, he glanced at the faintly silver storage pouch that was left behind from the body.

Han Li calmly reached for the storage pouch and summoned it into his hand. He then immersed his spiritual sense into it and casually probed it, only to be filled with disappointment. Apart from a dozen mid grade spirit stones, there were only a few common tool refinement materials and a few bottles of medicine pills.

When Han Li opened the medicine pills, he found them to be of common quality. It seemed the Moulan Plains were truly lacking cultivation materials. Even a grand Nascent Soul spell warrior lacked decent items.

As for any jade slips, the storage pouch completely lacked them. Han Li was baffled by this and sighed in great disappointment. He originally wished to acquire a few spirit techniques and see if there were any techniques that would greatly increase his strength in a short amount of time. Unfortunately, there was no such luck.

After putting away the storage pouch, Han Li raised his head and glanced at the huge mountain with a fervant gaze. Although the treasure's master had already fled as a manifested Nascent Soul,

the black mountain still remained in its enlarged form, sparkling with black light.

Han Li narrowed his eyes and gently beckoned to the mountain. The masterless ancient treasure flickered with brilliance and quickly shrunk before shooting towards Han Li. By the time it arrived within his grasp, it had already turned back into a miniature mountain.

Han Li curiously weighted the small mountain in his hand. It wasn't particularly heavy, and he examined it several times through only to find three faint gold character on the bottom of the mountain.

"Thousand Layer Mountain!" Han Li couldn't help but utter its name. Satisfaction appeared from his eyes.

After putting away the mountain, Han Li glanced at the Wind Riding Chariot and put it away as well.

After glancing in the direction that the old man's Nascent Soul had fled, Han Li lowered his head in thought before deciding to fly off in a different direction. Not long after, no trace of Han Li could be seen nearby.

...

Among a group of hills, there was no one to be found, only fields filled with straws as tall as men. But not long after, azure light flashed from the horizon.

A short moment later, the azure streak arrived above the hill. It flew around around and faded away to reveal Han Li.

After taking another glance beneath him, he frowned and suddenly flung his sleeve. Several streaks of azure light directly struck the hill like shooting stars.

As a result, the azure light bursted about a hundred meters in the air. A layer of extremely faint white light suddenly appeared in the air. There were four people underneath it that were looking at

him, all wearing a faint smile. They were Marquis Nanlong, the white-haired old man, the old man, and the tan-skinned man.

Marquis Nanlong twirled his beard and chuckled, "It is truly fortunate for Han Li to have arrived safely!" He then waved his hand, causing the light barrier to disappear.

"Oh! The others still haven't arrived?" Han Li replied with a smile and floated down before them.

The tan man shook his head and calmly said, "We fear the other Fellow Daoist may have had trouble fleeing. When we separately fled, Fellow Daoist Long and Fellow Daoist Wang were pursued by spell warriors. It is quite a difficult matter to break away from them."

Marquis Nanlong excitedly said, "However, I feared for you most. If I saw correctly, that Wind Riding Chariot should've chased after you. Tch tch! Fellow Daoist managed to easily shake it off despite its amazing speed. It seems I've misjudged you."

Han Li pursed his lips when he heard the Marquis. He could faintly make out a trace of bewilderment from his words.

Han Li wore a calm expression and casually replied, "It was nothing. I merely hold a bit of confidence in my movement techniques."

Seeing that Han Li wasn't eager to explain how he escaped, the Marquis tactfully changed the topic and began to talk about the Nine Nation Union's upcoming war with the Moulan. It would shake the entire continent as a whole.

Excluding the white-clothed old man, the old woman and the tan man both interestedly included themselves in the conversation.

Marquis Nanlong mysteriously smiled and said, "I recall that the last war with the spell warriors lasted over ten years. Who knows how many years this war will last. However, the Heavenly South's Devil Dao, Righteous Dao, and even Brother Han's Heavenly Dao

Alliance will have to send soldiers. And given the Drifting Cloud Sect's position in the Heavenly Dao Alliance, a Nascent Soul elder will be required to participate in the battle. Perhaps Fellow Daoist Han will have another chance to visit the Moulan Plains!"

The old woman nodded her head and softly said, "In addition to the three superpowers sending assistance to the Nine Nations Union, there are also a few vagrant cultivators that volunteer to block the spell warriors with many an expert among them. The Moulan are incredibly difficult to hold off."

The tan man frowned and mused, "However, I am quite baffled as to why Moulan would launch an attack despite knowing that the powers of our Heavenly South have united against them. From their current forces, they don't have a chance of winning, considering what had happened in the last war. It isn't wise for them to take the initiative to attack with just this. In the last war, they redoubled their attack because of an abrupt wave of reinforcements. Could it be that most of their tribes will be participating in this war?"

"That certainly is possible, but..."

As the conversation continued, much time had unknowingly passed by.

Suddenly, Marquis Nanlong suddenly paused in the middle of comment and he turned his head to the sky. The others unconsciously followed his gaze and their faces grew serious. It was possible that a spell warrior would arrive instead of one of their scattered cultivators. They were in the Moulan Plains after all.

They saw a flash of light from the horizon, revealing one black streak and two crimson spheres of light flying towards them. Marquis Nanlong attentively glanced at them for a moment before calming down.

Marquis Nanlong smiled and said, "It's nothing. Just Fellow

Daoist Wang and his two juniors.” When the others heard this, they also appeared happy.

A short moment later, the streaks of light grew closer. This time, Marquis Nanlong directly removed the restrictions, allowing Wang Tiangu and company to land next to the rest of the party.

When Wang Tiangu saw Han Li amongst the party, he revealed a trace of surprise and said, “Yi! Fellow Daoist Han arrived earlier than we did. That is truly surprising!” It seemed he also saw the Wind Riding Chariot pursue Han Li. It was likely he basked in schadenfreude at the time.

Han Li swept his gaze to Wang Chan and Yan Ruyan at his side and calmly replied, “It was merely a fluke! However, Fellow Daoist Wang was able to escape without injuries while looking after two juniors. You truly have my admiration.” His tone seemed to carry a deeper meaning.

Wang Tiangu indifferently replied, “Hehe, the spell warrior pursuing me wasn’t fast in the slightest. My two juniors and I joined hands to employ one of our sect’s movement techniques. We were able to easily shake them off. It isn’t comparable to escaping pursuit from the Wind Riding Chariot.”

Han Li inwardly sneered. Just as he thought to say something further, his expression suddenly changed and he swallowed his words.

Marquis Nanlong raised his head to the sky and yelped with a joyful expression, “Yi! Fellow Daoist Long is coming. It seems our luck is quite good. We can all hurry to our destination unharmed. I was actually pondering whether or not we’d be able to succeed in breaking the formation if we were missing a few members!”

When the party heard this, they all revealed joy. If they were were incapable of acquiring the treasure because of a missing member, it would be a rather depressing matter.

The white-clothed old man suddenly broke his silence and gravely said, “Not good! It seems Fellow Daoist Long is injured and is still being pursued!”

Once the others heard this, Han Li and the others hastily turned their eyes to the sky with shock. They saw that there was actually a green and red streak of light closely pursuing the stern-faced cultivator. In the blink of an eye, they had already arrived at the hill where the party was located.

Marquis Nanlong’s expression quickly turned sullen.

Chapter 696: Alarmed Retreat

“It seems Fellow Daoist Long has encountered some trouble. Two spell warriors are chasing after him. Everyone, set out!” With that resolute shout, Marquis Nanlong flew towards the sky in a ball of golden light.

The others glanced at one another before successively following suit. Suddenly, eight streaks of various colored light appeared above the hills, hastily flying towards the stern-faced cultivator surnamed Long.

The white streak of light that was rushing towards their location immediately grew faster upon spotting them. In an instant, it arrived before the party and faded away to reveal the stern-faced cultivator. His face was pale as if he had suffered damage to his vitality.

“Many thanks for your assistance. I cannot thank you all enough!” The stern-faced cultivator saluted the party and his anxious expression was replaced with gratitude.

Marquis Nanlong floated in the air and asked with a voice of concern, “It is no problem! Are you alright? How did you get two spell warriors to pursue you? I recall that only one went to chase you.”

The stern-faced cultivator bitterly smiled and helplessly said, “I’m fine. But after being pursued for the greater half of a day, another spell warrior tagged along the pursuit. I spent two days trying to outrun them, and my vitality is quite worn down!”

The old woman sighed and said, “It was no wonder why Fellow Daoist Long fled here. Apart from Fellow Daoist Nanlong and Fellow Daoist Yun, nobody else would’ve been able to escape from two early Nascent Soul stage spell warriors.”

Han Li glanced into the distance and smiled, “However,

regardless of how powerful these two pursuers may be, they are rather quite courageous to stay here for the time being. Do they not fear retaliation for overreaching themselves?”

Needless to say, when the two spell warriors spotted Han Li and company, they simply stopped rather than immediately fleeing. They merely gazed at them from a distance.

Their appearances were clear to see from the party's immense spiritual sense. One of them was golden skinned and wore a crown of feathers along with hemp robes. The other had a sinister appearance and wore green robes. They were both spell warriors at the early Nascent Soul stage.

Marquis Nanlong snorted and coldly shouted, “You two Fellow Daoists still haven't left? Could it be you wish for us to take action? If you two aren't careful, you will meet your end here!”

The hemp-robed spell warrior glanced at them and caustically said, “What an arrogant tone! Although we aren't a match for you, it is beyond your powers to kill us. We don't need to attack you, merely delay you for half a day. Do you really believe you will have a chance of leaving? It would be better for you all to obediently sit in place. Perhaps we may allow your souls to reincarnate!”

Marquis Nanlong furiously laughed and began to glow with blinding light, “Delay us for half a day? Do you believe that we will allow it?”

The green-robed spell warrior expressionlessly said, “Perhaps! As masters of the Moulán Plains, it is only proper for us to entertain our guests!”

Marquis Nanlong's expression grew sullen, “Humph! It seems you won't recognize defeat until you see your own end. Brother Yun, let's attack!”

However, the white-clothed old man revealed a trace of helplessness and sighed, “I originally wished to preserve magic

power for the matters ahead, but we cannot have these two buzzing on our tail. We can only attack!”

With that said, he opened his mouth and spat out a silver dharmic wheel[1. Eight-spoked wheel, Dharmachakra]. The wheel was fist-sized and glittered with light. It gradually expanded to a meter in length.

When the two spell warriors saw this, they immediately stepped back. Brilliance began to shine from their body as they cautiously glanced at the old man.

As for Marquis Nanlong, he wordlessly swept his sleeve and tossed out a golden flying sword. Han Li and company also began to silently summon their magic power and slowly drifted forward.

At that moment, a red streak of light suddenly shined from the horizon in the direction of the two spell warriors. As the fiery light neared, the party couldn't help but cease their attacks.

The two spell warriors naturally knew that something had appeared behind them. The hemp-robed spell warrior calmly beckoned to the fiery light and revolved once above his head before steadily dropping into his hand. It combust into flames and began to burn at the center of his hand.

It was a sound transmission talisman!

“What?” The hemp-robed spell warrior quickly scanned its contents with his spiritual sense and cried out in alarm. Marquis Nanlong and company were able to clearly see the shock on his face.

This person suddenly turned his head to the green robed spell warrior and sent him a voice transmission. The green-robed spell warrior's expression changed upon hearing him and also yelped. The two carefully examined the cultivators present before their gazes arrived onto Han Li. Their expressions grew grave.

Han Li appeared entirely calm, but he already guessed that this

likely had to do with the fatal injury he had dealt to the old man, forcing his Nascent Soul to escape. Could it be that the old man had a close relationship with the two?

As Han Li pondered, the two spell warriors fiercely glared at him before glancing at each other and revealing a trace of hesitation. They softly sent a few voice transmissions to one another before wordlessly retreating in two flashes of bright light.

The others were surprised by this. After a moment of hesitation, they decided to not pursue them. In the blink of an eye, the two spell warriors had already disappeared off into the horizon.

Wang Tiangu mysteriously smiled and asked, "Fellow Daoist Han, those two seemed to be particularly mindful of you. Do you recognize those two spell warriors?" It was unknown what he had intended by the question.

Han Li replied without any hesitation, "I don't recognize them. This is the first time I've arrived in the Moulan Plains. How could I possibly know them?"

Marquis Nanlong frowned but he soon unfurrowed his brow.

"Alright, regardless of what was going on with those two spell warriors, let's hurry and acquire the treasures. We can't stay for long in the Moulan Plains." Marquis Nanlong didn't inquire much about the situation and pretended that it hadn't happened.

Wang Tiangu immediately dropped the matter upon hearing the Marquis. Although the others were also puzzled, they didn't speak much of it. Since the two spell warriors seemed to look upon Han Li with resentment, the party felt disinclined from digging too deeply into the matter.

As a result, Marquis Nanlong and the white-clothed old man led the way, and the party quickly traversed through the Moulan Plains.

Following along the border of the Moulan Plains, they headed

west and arrived before a barren, ashen-grey mountain. It was only several hundred meters tall and was devoid of any vegetation. Han Li and the others glanced at the mountain with astonishment.

Master Cang Kun's cave residence was such an unremarkable mountain? The spiritual Qi was also sparse here. If Marquis Nanlong hadn't led the way, they definitely wouldn't have arrived in such a place.

"Alright, here we are. Fellow Daoist Yun and I will open the outer layer of restrictions. Follow us closely." Marquis Nanlong gave the party a word of warning before leading the way alongside the white-robed old man. When they arrived at the center of the mountain, they each took out a small flag.

These two flags were a meter long. One sparkled with dazzling green light, and the other was yellow and fluttered with faint talisman characters. One could tell they were unordinary at first glance.

The others couldn't help but hold their breaths in anticipation as they attentively gazed at the two's actions.

The two began to softly mutter incantations without pause. The two flags simultaneously began to twinkled with light and gradually began to tremble as if attempting to break free from their grasp.

"Go!" At nearly the same instant, Maquis Nanlong and the white-clothed old man released their flags at nearly the same time. In a flash of brilliance, the small flags dug into some portion of the earth and disappeared without trace.

A short moment later, there was no sign of movement. Han Li and the others all revealed traces of doubt.

The old woman signed and was about to ask a question when the earth began to tremble. Most of the party was unable to keep their balance amongst the trembling ground.

However, the following scene left Han Li startled.

Chapter 697: Lightning Fire Spike

As the ground fiercely trembled, a fine crack spread from the top of the mountain down the base of the mountain. White light began to shine from the crack as if the mountain were split into two.

Han Li and company felt their breathes turn cold. Their hearts felt complete awe at the sight of Marquis Nanlong and Fellow Daoist Yun splitting open the mountain. Despite their shock, they still managed to appear calm as they observed what was happening.

The two with the lowest cultivation, Wang Chan and Yan Ruyan, stood behind Wang Tiangu in complete silence.

After Han Li coldly glanced at the two, he turned his sights back on the mountain. It seemed he wouldn't have an opportunity to slay Wang Chan before they acquired the treasure.

As Marquis Nanlong and the white-clothed old man continued their incantations for a moment more, the mountain eventually split into two, creating a huge crevice that was over thirty meters wide. A limestone stairway laid within.

“Let's go.” With a trace of excitement on the old man's face, he led the way. As for the other founder of the party, Marquis Nanlong remained behind with a smile.

Han Li felt his heart stir. It seems that this white-clothed old man was quite the character to have Marquis Nanlong actually guard the rear.

The others saw this and glanced at each other, but they all tactfully kept silent on the matter. Instead, they calmly walked inside.

The stairs lasted for quite a while. White moonstones were embedded in each side, but the further they descended, the colder it became. Not long after, they were already three hundred meters

deep into the mountain, and the moonlight stone's faint white light had soon turned into a faint green for some unknown reason. This caused the descending passage to appear ominous.

When Han Li saw this, he frowned and unconsciously pulled away from the tan cultivator ahead of it. If anything happened, the distance would give him enough time to react. Han Li wasn't the only one to do this. Apart from Marquis Nanlong and the white-clothed old man, the other cultivators began to keep a distance of about thirty meters from each other.

Marquis Nanlong and the old man surnamed Yun clearly knew that the other cultivators were actually taking precautions against them. However, they deliberately ignored this and continued forward without a trace of dissatisfaction.

After the time it took to finish a meal, Han Li and company had arrived in a large mysterious hall. The reason why it was mysterious was because it appeared as if the entire hall appeared was created from a giant hollowed boulder of jade. Its sparkling and translucent blue light appeared extremely beautiful.

Now that they stood within the hundred meter wide hall, everyone wore a face of amazement. This material obviously couldn't have been true jade. Once they swept their spiritual sense past the walls, they were promptly repelled. It was incapable of seeing past them.

Han Li wasn't alarmed this. He used his spiritual sense to probe the other parts of the hall only to find that they were all the same.

Han Li inwardly pondered with a sense of apprehension and turned his gaze to the other cultivators in the room. Wang Tiangu and the others also frowned. It was clear that they also found this to be troublesome.

Could this be where the Wondrous Soul Restriction was located? It seemed Marquis Nanlong wasn't exaggerating. Just as Han Li's mind began to wonder, the entire hall began to violently shake and

they heard a series of huge tremors from behind them.

The old woman and the others hastily turned their heads in alarm. They discovered the the stairway had unknowingly disappeared and was replaced with walls of sparkling blue light.

A moment later, the entire hall became deathly quiet.

“Fellow Daoist Nanlong, what is the meaning of this?” The tan cultivator asked with a sullen expression. The other cultivators also became vigilant as they glanced at Marquis Nanlong and the white-clothed old man; their eyes flickering around the room.

Marquis Nanlong didn’t display the slightest surprise and calmly said, “Be at ease, Fellow Daoists! The outside restrictions were merely reactivated, causing the mountain to close once more. The last time we came here, this also happened. We merely had to wait three days until the restrictions’ strength was at its weakest before leaving the mountain. We won’t be trapped here. Moreover, with the outer restrictions shut, we have no fear of spell warriors discovering us.”

While the others were somewhat skeptical of that explanation, they appeared visibly relieved. So long as Marquis Nanlong and the white-clothed old man were in the hall with them, they had no fear of any trap being set or any malicious planning.

The tan cultivator saluted and said, “So it was like that! It seems I was being rash.”

Fellow Daoist Nanlong chuckled and casually said, “It’s nothing! Let’s hurry to break the restriction. Last time, Fellow Daoist Yun and I returned dejected from failure. This Wondrous Soul Formation isn’t easy to break.”

The old woman’s wrinkly face broke into a smile and she said, “Is the formation truly that difficult to break? I’ve acquired a treasure in the past that was specialized in breaking many restrictions and barriers. Perhaps we can save ourselves the trouble and simply use

this treasure to break the restriction?”

A trace of joy flickered from the white-clothed old man's expression and he immediately replied, “Yi? If Lady Tai possesses such an exceptional treasure, please give it a try. Our method of using spiritual sense to dissolve the restriction isn't guaranteed to be successful.”

Revealing a trace of delight, Marquis Nanlong said, “That's right. Fellow Daoist Tai, please go ahead.”

The old woman chuckled and a trace of spirit flickered from her dull eyes, “Since you Fellow Daoists have both agreed, I'll be blunt. If this somehow manages to luckily break the restrictions, will I have first pick alongside you two as well?”

The other cultivators had slightly changed expressions after hearing this.

Marquis Nanlong revealed slight surprise, but after glancing at the white-clothed old man, he suddenly said to the others, “Regardless of whether it be Lady Tai or anyone else, so long as you succeed in breaking the formation, they will have priority selection for a treasure after us two. What does everyone think?” Once that was said, Marquis Nanlong swept his gaze past the party.

Han Li and Wang Tiangu both appeared indifferent to this, but the tan man and the stern-faced cultivator appeared displeased. Regardless, no objections were raised.

Marquis Nanlong smiled and decisively said, “The others have no objections. Lady Tai, you may take action.”

“Since that's the case, I will be making an attempt.” The old woman was inwardly delighted. She held quite some confidence in her treasure. So long as it wasn't an intangible formation like an illusion formation, she had a large chance of success. Why else would she take the risk of angering the rest of the party?

Lady Tai flung out her sleeve and took out an object that was only

several inches long. This fire-red object was narrow at the front and thick at the back, resembling something like a spike.

The old man paid no attention to the others and spat a mist of blinding light onto the spike. A short moment later, the spike flickered with red light and began to emit waves of heat that quickly spread throughout the hall.

As experienced as they were, the Marquis and the white-clothed old man immediately knew that this object was unordinary and unconsciously took a few steps away from the woman as they glanced at her spike.

Wang Chan and Yan Ruyan revealed shock upon contacting the heat wave and hastily enveloped themselves in a crimson barrier. They felt their bodies scorch. As late Core Formation cultivators, they were unable to endure such temperatures.

With a flash of white light, the spike began to crackle.

Han Li and the others began to keenly gaze at the spike, discovering that the spike's flames faintly pulsed with white lightning.

This was an ancient treasure with the dual attributes of lightning and fire! The cultivators looked upon the old woman with varied emotions.

The woman ignored this and deeply glanced at the blue wall in front of her. Her wrist shook and she thrust the Lightning Fire Spike into it. Fiery light flourished and muffled booms sounded out. The spike began to swiftly revolve above her head and soon its speed increased to the point where it became a blur.

The faint red-white blur quickly flew throughout the hall, barely able to be seen. The cultivators in the hall all watched with amazement.

Han Li was particularly alarmed at the sight. This was the first time he had seen such a swift ancient treasure. Even Nascent Soul

cultivators would find it difficult to defend against it. If he were to fight against such a treasure, he would have no way of dealing with it apart from the Thunderstorm Wings.

Chapter 698: Taking Action

The old woman pointed at the faint blur of light in the air and solemnly shouted, “Go!” Suddenly, red and white light flickered and the Lightning Fire Spike fiercely struck the blue crystal wall in front of the old woman.

With a muffled bang, lightning and flames ruptured and enveloped the side of the wall. The resulting light made the scene blinding to the eye.

Han Li’s pupils contracted. Although he wasn’t able to see it, the spike’s spiritual Qi fluctuations were quite powerful. It was no wonder why Lady Tai held such confidence in it.

‘But against the Wondrous Soul Restriction, this power isn’t...’ Before Han Li finished his thoughts, the lightning fire had already faded away.

The spike was gently floating several inches away from the wall, but the wall appeared completely unscathed.

Marquis Nanlong revealed a trace of disappointment, but then he chuckled and said, “While the might of this magic treasure is quite powerful, it still lacks the strength to break through the Wondrous Soul Restriction. Thank you for your trouble, Fellow Daoist Tai! Are there any other Fellow Daoists that wish to make an attempt to break the restriction?”

Unresigned, the woman snorted and said, “When did I say that this was my treasure’s true power? It was merely a probing strike. It seems anything less than its complete stress won’t do.”

Marquis Nanlong’s eyes brightened and he happily said, “Oh! If Fellow Daoist Tai still wishes to continue her attempt, please don’t hesitate to do so.”

The old woman didn’t reply and promptly held her hands in an incantation gesture. The floating Lightning Fire Spike returned

above the old woman's head. Then under the influence of the old woman's incantation gestures, it began to revolve in place. Its speed began to quickly increase, slowly merging lightning and blazing fire as one as it emitted a strange hum.

The others' spirits were shaken as they stared at the scene.

A short moment later, the Lightning Fire Spike appeared to have truly fused together its lightning and flames. Bizzare scarlet lightning continuously arced from its surface.

This scene caused Han Li's heart to stir. He made a faint connection in his mind and he sunk into thought. The others were also amazed by this scene. They began to think higher of the Lightning Fire Spike.

"Break," the old woman muttered. With the sound of tearing wind, the Lightning Fire Spike brimming with scarlet lightning disappeared from sight and struck the crystal wall once more.

This time, there was no eruption of lightning or fire. There was only a light pop. With assistance from its high speed rotations and scarlet lightning, it was able to drill into the crystal wall with only a moment of resistance.

Once the drill bore into the wall, its speed greatly decreased, but under the influence of the old woman's incantation gestures, it slowly pulled forward and drilled with all its might.

A short moment later, the white-clothed old man and Marquis Nanlong revealed delight. Wang Tiangu and the others watched the scene with spirited gazes and nervousness. It was unknown whether they hoped the old woman would succeed or fail.

Han Li inwardly scoffed and wore a faint smirk on his face.

No one else noticed Han Li's change of expression, except for Yan Ruyan who had unintentionally glanced in Han Li's direction. The woman was startled for a moment and revealed a trace of bewilderment.

When the Lightning Fire Spike drilled about a foot into the crystal wall, it met calamity. The originally still crystal wall had suddenly shined with blue radiance. Countless threads of scorching white light emerged from the wall and tightly wrapped around the Lightning Fire Spike in a profuse glimmering display.

With a huge boom, the Lightning Fire Spike exploded and the resulting light faded away, revealing the wall to be completely restored.

The old woman's face paled, but soon, furious alarm could be seen from her face. The Fire Lightning Spike was an ancient treasure she had expended vast effort into acquiring. It was impossible for her to not feel distress over having it so easily destroyed. For a time, she felt a burning sensation at the pit of her stomach as if she were about to spit up blood.

The others were dumbstruck by the sight and were quite alarmed. As for Yan Ruyan, she glanced at Han Li with astonishment and wore a pensive expression.

Fortunately, the old woman was an exceptional character. After a moment of tense rage, she took a deep breathe and was able to calm down her raging blood.

She turned her heads to the other and bitterly smiled, "It seems I've made quite a fool of myself. The Wondrous Soul Restriction is truly worthy of its name as one of the top ten ancient formations. I have no method of destroying it. However, you Fellow Daoists possess vast abilities. Perhaps one of you may be able to break the restriction!" Once that was said, she took several steps back in a gesture of resignation.

Marquis Nanlong's smile had long disappeared and he could only sigh, "Despite Fellow Daoist Tai's efforts, she failed. A truly unfortunate matter indeed. Are there any other Fellow Daoists that are willing to give it a try?" Once that was said, Marquis Nanlong glanced at Wang Tiangu in particular. After all, he was a

spell formation grandmaster renowned throughout the cultivation world.

But since the others witnessed the destruction of the old woman's ancient treasure, any interest in making an attempt had been thoroughly extinguished. With their attempts only ending in tremendous failure, who would dare to risk their treasures?

Wang Tiangu remained silent as he stood at the corner of the hall. Although he did possess some understanding of ancient spell formations, he had yet to encounter something on the level of the ten great ancient restrictions, let alone have a method to dissolve it. As such, he wasn't about to volunteer and make a fool of himself.

Han Li, who had remained silent throughout this, suddenly spoke, "As untalented as I am, I would like to make an attempt. How about it?" He had spoke about the topic rather lightly.

These words had greatly surprised the rest of the party. Marquis Nanlong was particularly surprised, but he said, "Of course. Please go ahead, Fellow Daoist Han!"

Han Li promptly took several steps forward and approached a side of the wall that hadn't been struck.

When Wang Chan saw this, a trace of derision could be seen from his face once he recovered from his shock. He uttered a few sound transmissions to Yan Ruyan, but she hardly gave any reaction. As for Wang Tiangu, he maintained a calm exterior, but he was filled with bewilderment at the idea of Han Li breaking the formation.

Han Li stood in front of the stone wall and didn't immediately take action. Instead, he raised his hand and extended his finger. He circulated spiritual power throughout his body and emitted a streak of light from his fingertip that was several inches long. In a pulse of light, he swept the azure streak past the surface of the crystal wall to no effect.

Han Li wasn't discouraged by this and simply enveloped his hand in a layer of azure spirit Qi. He then extended his five fingers and placed his palm against the wall. He was completely motionless as if he were sensing something.

Han Li's strange actions were completely unfathomable to the cultivators watching him, but none stepped forward to bother him.

Completely unbeknownst to the party, Han Li's eyes were faintly glowing with blue light as he deeply peered into the crystal wall. He seemed to be examining it with all his ability.

After a quarter hour passed in this regard, the others didn't reveal any impatience or take the initiative to act. Han Li then sighed. The blue light disappeared from his eyes and he reached towards his storage pouch without any hesitation and took out a pile of over ten various-colored formation flags.

The white-clothed old man quickly recovered from his surprise and excitedly asked, "So Fellow Daoist Han was also proficient in the art of spell formations. Could it be you're thinking for breaking a formation with a formation? Could it be you understand the mysteries of the Wondrous Soul Restriction?"

Han Li nonchalantly replied, "Understand what mystery? I'm merely studied in a few ancient formations of a similar type and want to give it a try!"

He soon spat a breath of azure Qi onto the flags, causing them to brightly shine. Under Han Li's command, they flew out from his hand and pointed their flags in the direction of the crystal wall, then floated motionlessly in the air.

Chapter 699: Breaking the Formation

Han Li formed an incantation gesture with his hands and the dozen formation flags began to hover and arrange themselves in a strange formation as they faced the wall. It appeared incomprehensible.

At that moment, Han Li began to softly utter an incantation and a dozen incantation seals flew from his hands, accurately striking each of the flags in the formation. The flags trembled for a moment before shining with various-colored lights and shooting out threads of light that wrapped around each other.

Wang Tiangu and the other cultivators familiar with spell formations frowned. They felt this spell formation seemed somewhat familiar while knowing that they hadn't actually seen such a formation before. They all couldn't help but secretly analyze it as if wishing to discover its secret.

As if unwilling to allow the other cultivators to study the profound aspects of the spell formation, he softly shouted and had the spell formation emit blinding white light. Those that were staring at the spell formation were caught off guard and were forced to turn their gazes away.

While these old eccentrics were startled, they secretly channeled spiritual power through their eyes and immediately opened them once more. As a result, they couldn't help but reveal shock. They saw the flag formation was already embedded into the crystal wall without any mishap. It appeared almost as if the flags had grown out of the wall.

At that moment, Marquis Nanlong and the white-clothed old man revealed delight. Their confidence in Han Li grew.

Wang Tiangu's expression changed for just a moment, but Wang Chan who stood behind him revealed a complex amazement and was entirely amazed. Yan Ruyan slightly frowned and wore a

puzzled expression as she gazed at the spell formation on the wall.

Han Li took a few steps forward towards the wall and pressed his hands against it, his fingers faintly shining with azure light. At that same moment, the spell formation on the wall seemed to respond as the center of the formation began to glow with rainbow light. The light became increasingly brilliant and gradually spread to cover the entire wall in a magnificent display.

As everyone was entranced by the scene, Han Li pulled his hands away from the crystal wall and his figure blurred, reappeared at a neighboring wall.

After examining it for a long while, he took out another set of formation flags and arranged the flags differently from the first formation. After they flickered with white light, they embedded themselves in the crystal wall once more.

Because the cultivators were prepared and protected their eyes with spiritual light, they were able to clearly observe how easily the flags had pierced into the walls under Han Li's command. They couldn't help but click their tongues in surprise.

Placing down the spell formations onto each of the four walls using this same method took no less than an hour.

The other cultivators didn't reveal any impatience. They all knew that dissolving such a profound ancient restriction wasn't something that could be done easily.

Having arranged a spell formation on each of the walls, Han Li walked to the center of the hall and raised his hand, revealing a green formation plate. He struck the plate with several complex incantations seals, causing both the plate and the four crystal walls to simultaneously twinkle with various colored light and pulse in pattern.

Han Li didn't bother to glance around him and simply lowered his head, uttering, "Break."

In the same instance he spoke, the light surged and released an ear-piercing cry. It became increasingly loud to the point where it sounded as if a myriad of birds had simultaneously cried out.

A huge rumble shook the room and the entire hall grew dim as the lights vanished.

The others then discovered that the crystal walls surrounding them had unexpectedly vanished, only to be replaced with ordinary stone walls. One of the stone walls even had a stone gate that was twenty meters tall and twelve meters wide.

A trace of joy flickered from Marquis Nanlong's face and he excitedly said, "I didn't expect that Fellow Daoist Han was so skilled in spell formations. Haha! Great! Fellow Daoist Yun and I will naturally keep our word. After we both get our pick, Fellow Daoist will have priority in choosing a treasure."

The white-clothed old man wore a smile when he saw the stone gate before him. His eyes were filled with a fervor.

In his excitement, the tan cultivator restlessly said, "Brother Nanlong, let's see what lays inside. Surely there can't be more restrictions inside!"

Marquis Nanlong confidently said, "Be at ease, there can't be. According to what Master Cang Kun left behind, the cave residence should only have two layers of restrictions." He then stepped forward without another word and swept his sleeve past the stone gate, easily opening it.

The many cultivators felt the last of their worries disappear when they saw them and began to follow Marquis Nanlong outside.

Once the old woman arrived outside the stone gate, she yelled in astonishment, "What is this!?" Han Li and the rest of the party appeared astounded by what laid beyond the gate.

There was a hall that was several time larger than the previous

one, but there was also an exquisitely-styled pavilion at the center of the large hall. This pavilion was created from translucent white jade. It was over thirty meters tall and had only two stories. On top of its ten meter gate were the words Jadepier Pavilion written in silver characters.

Regardless of how it could be said, a pavilion at the center of the hall was an odd sight. There was a jet-black altar table that stood in front of the pavilion with a sparkling meter-long scroll that laid on top of it.

As for the rest of the hall, it was completely vacant and lacked any other gates.

Everyone instantly assumed that the treasure was to be hidden inside the pavilion.

After Marquis Nanlong and the white-clothed old man glanced at each other, the old man walked towards the altar table with caution.

The rest of the party felt their hearts stir, but they raised no objections. They simply calmly observed the old man's actions.

The white-clothed old man hesitated for a moment before spitting out a mist of white light. The mist wrapped around the scroll and raised it up. With a series of turns, the scroll opened to reveal the portrait of a sword-bearing scholar that was gazing to the sky.

“That is Master Cang Kun?” The stern-faced cultivator asked with astonishment.

Wang Tiangu's gaze flickered past the portrait and said, “It seems so. However, there should be a reason why it was enshrined there. However, it doesn't seem to be particularly precious in and of itself.

After a moment of thought, the old man slowly said, “I'll be giving it a try then!”

His two hands formed an incantation seal and he flicked his finger. Several red spell seals struck the portrait, causing it to brightly shine with silver light for a just a moment. It then faded away as if nothing had occurred.

The white-clothed old man hesitantly said, “How strange! It is possible that this is but a simple portrait!”

After a moment of silence, Marquis Nanlong suggested, “Since that’s the case, let’s put away the portrait for now. First let’s search for the other treasures first and distribute them! Does anyone have any objections?”

The old woman glanced at the portrait and chuckled, “I have no objections. Let’s follow Fellow Daoist Nanlong’s suggestion.” Since the others have yet to see the other treasures, they all agreed.

As a result, the white-clothed old man rolled the scroll back up and carefully placed it in his storage pouch.

As the Marquis looked at the pavilion, he excitedly said, “Let’s go into the pavilion and have a look!”

The party walked around the altar table and arrived in front of the tightly shut pavilion. Marquis Nanlong then impatiently pushed open its gate with a creak.

Before Han Li and the others could enter, they were met with a blinding light. It blinded them for a long while before their vision could adjust. Once they could see once more, they spotted three slender black wood shelves on the first floor. They were filled with the items that had emitted the dazzling light.

The party was instantly filled with joy at the sight. But as each of them were experienced and cunning, they didn’t dare to commit any mistaken actions out of greed.

With the party restraining their fervent desires, they slowly walked into the pavilion and examined each of the treasures on the shelves.

Chapter 700: Splitting the Treasure

The three shelves of treasures were placed in rows at the center of the first floor. They were clearly seen by everyone.

The first row had sixteen brilliant ancient and magic treasures. The second row had rare materials of all shapes and sizes, from a fist-sized chunk of iron to a blood-red crystal. The third row had the fewest materials. It only consisted of several inch-large bottles. They seemed to contain medicine pills.

Han Li expressionlessly swept his gaze past the treasures and maintained a calm appearance.

Although the others had maintained a calm appearance as well, none dared to fiddle with the treasures as they pleased. They only appraised the value and uses of each of the magic treasures with their eyes. They would be dividing up the treasures soon.

A short moment later, Marquis Nanlong stepped forward and began to examine the treasures on the party's behalf. As for the others, they began to friendly discuss the treasure's origins and applications, but who knew what they were truly thinking.

At that moment, Han Li glanced around the room. In addition to the shelves, there was a praying mat and a small, emerald-green plant placed at the window.

Han Li's heart stirred. Just as he thought to walk over to them, the white-clothed old man had appeared before the praying mat in a blur.

The praying mat flew into his grasp with a wave of his hand and he began to look over it.

Han Li frowned and instead walked over to the small plant by the window, closely examining it.

After he began looking over it, he suddenly heard a sweet voice from behind him, "Is Senior Han interested in this Yinfocus Herb?"

Although it is rarely seen, it is an optimal ingredient for refining Yin type medicine pills. It is able to increase medicine power without any drawbacks.”

With an odd expression, he slowly turned around and saw Yan Ruyan standing behind him.

Han Li calmly replied, “The Yinfocus Herb is different from other herbs. Its medicinal properties is strongest only when it is a hundred years old. Now that it has reached such a vast age, it no longer has a use.” Han Li’s gaze swept over the room and found that Wang Chan was closely following after Wang Tiangu. He was excitedly whispering something with his second uncle, and wasn’t paying any attention to what Yan Ruyan was doing.

Yan Ruyan smiled and gazed at Han Li with bright, wandering eyes, “I didn’t think that Senior Han was proficient not only in spell formations, but medicine pill refinement as well. You truly have my admiration!”

Han Li grew greatly vigilant from the woman’s eagerness to chat. He bluntly replied, “Pill refinement? Only to a minor degree. However Fellow Daoist Yan, do you know of my relationship with your husband? Do you not fear arousing your husband’s resentment from speaking with me?”

Yan Ruyan’s smile faded away and she said with a helpless tone, “Of course I am aware. But I still vainly hope to dissolve the hatred between Senior and my lord husband.”

Han Li raised his brow and a sneer flickered on his face, “Dissolve? Your Devil Dao Sects and my Heavenly Dao Alliance always had a hostile relationship. What is there to dissolve?”

Yan Ruyan bitterly smiled in response and began to speak when Marquis Nanlong suddenly called out, “Come over Fellow Daoists. We will first be distributing the treasures of this floor before heading up.”

Once this was said, Han Li paid no more heed to Yan Ruyan and walked over. Yan Ruyan's beautiful face flickered with several emotions in response before gracefully following after him.

When Wang Chan saw that Yan Ruyan was following after Han Li, he appeared slightly bewildered. But after giving Yan Ruyan a deep glance, he shrewdly decided to keep silent on the matter. As for Wang Tiangu, he turned a blind eye to the matter.

Marquis Nanlong had already gathered all the items onto one shelf and calmly said, "Alright, let us make clear of the contents. There are six ancient treasures, ten magic treasures, and eight shares of materials and medicine pills that are organized in accordance to their value. Of course, what everyone wants the most will be the ancient treasures. After all, their full strength can be displayed without any refinement. However, these magic treasures aren't common items either. They were all magic treasures left behind from Master Cang Kun's formidable opponents. Their might should be great.

Even if only seventy percent of their might can be displayed after spending some time to refine them, it will certainly be worth it. As such, you may pick them in accordance to your desires. Fellow Daoists Wang Chan and Yan Ruyan, you will only be allocated one share."

The old woman bluntly rushed to take advantage of her age and lay a claim, "As old as I am, how do I have the time to refine a magic treasure. It will be an ancient treasure of course!"

The others didn't respond to her words, but they wryly laughed in their hearts.

At that moment, Wang Tiangu spoke with Marquis Nanlong with a heavy tone, "Will Fellow Daoists Nanlong and Yun not be taking first pick? There might not be any items you want on the second floor."

Marquis Nanlong's expression grew sullen and he coldly

said, “Brother Wang, what do you mean?”

The white-clothed old man stared at Wang Tiangu with an unfriendly expression.

Wang Tiangu turned a blind eye to this and chuckled, “It’s nothing, I felt it would just be a pity if you decided to not take first pick with these treasures.”

With an icy expression, Marquis Nanlong snorted, “There is nothing here that Fellow Daoist Yun and I wish to take using first priority. As for Fellow Daoist Han, it will be his choice to decide whether or not he will use his privilege.” He seemed to be greatly displeased with Wang Tiangu’s words.

Han Li rubbed his chin and casually said, “I also don’t wish to use my privilege. I’ll be keeping it for the second floor.”

Wang Tiangu spoke without reservation, “Since that’s the case, we will divide the treasures evenly amongst us. If you want an ancient treasure, then you renounce the right to pick a magic treasures afterwards. Fellow Daoists, do you agree?”

“That method is fine, I agree!”

“That’s fine!”

The others felt this to be fair and each of them agreed.

Of course, Han Li choose to renounce the magic treasures. As for the white-clothed old man and the tan man, they chose to renounce the ancient treasures. Instead, they each took two magic treasures and a share of the materials and medicine pills.

As for the others, they each took took a single ancient treasure.

Han Li acquired a bamboo tube. Although he didn’t know the level of its power or its abilities, he placed the item into his storage pouch without much care. He also took a share of the medicine pills and materials.

Once Han Li and the others each took a single magic treasure,

they finished distributing the items on the first floor.

As for the praying mat, Han Li noticed that the white-clothed old man had already tossed it to the floor without paying it any further attention. It didn't appear to be valuable. As for the Yinfocus Herb, it seemed that many had recognized it, but none were interested.

Han Li wryly chuckled in his mind. It seemed no one was fool enough to take it. These Nascent Soul eccentrics had examined everything present. After all, it was quite possible there were hidden treasures.

Once these Nascent Soul eccentrics searched through the first floor once more, the party climbed up to the second floor without any unexpected discoveries, but when they arrived they were stunned by the sight.

As soon as they entered the second floor, they were hit with a wave of incense. There was a small offering shrine at the top of the second floor stairs with a golden statue of a ferocious single horned demon with six arms. It appeared aggressive and lifelike.

There was a fire-red cauldron in front of the shrine that was emitting spirals of white smoke. It was the origin of the incense in the air.

Marquis Nanlong and the others were shocked to see that Master Cang Kun had enshrined a demon beast.

But when Han Li saw the statue, Han Li felt his heart jump. The statue seemed to exactly the same as the demon beast in the Sacred Provenance Plate. It even had the same fierce glare and six arms that were all raised to the heavens.

Han Li then turned his gaze toward everything else on the second floor.

About ten meters away, he saw a common desk and chair. There was an ink slab, a brush, bamboo slips, and many other items. On the side opposite to the shrine, there was a blue jade bed.

Although it was far away, he could faintly sense it emit a frigid aura as if it were carved from glacial jade. On top of the bed, there were three jade boxes that appeared rather eye-catching.

It seemed the second floor was Master Cang Kun's bedroom.

In a blur, the white-clothed old man appeared at the side of the cold jade bed and took one of the jade boxes into his hand.

“Wait a moment!” Soon after this was said, another silhouette appeared at the side of the bed. Their hand began to shine with black light and they pointed it at the old man's back.

The white-clothed old man withdrew his wrist and avoided the sneak attack. In his alarmed fury, he glared at his attacker with hostility, “What are you doing? You wish to exchange blows with me?”

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